

About



"Obiter Dicta" is a phrase usually employed in the world of law; it is Latin for "an incidental passing remark or opinion." Judges will often record a obiter dictum or just dictum in many cases, which are "by the way" statements that accompany a decision, to help establish the importance or precedence of a case. What could be a better title for a blog about anything and everything?

As part of my job as a Freshman Interest Group Teaching Assistant, I worked on creating an assignment for FIG students called the Documenting Freshman Year Project. This project serves two purposes: to teach students to understand what it means to be an historical actor by recording their experiences on campus and at large but also to actively preserve student work on campus as a larger part of historical preservation for the University of Oregon. Here's what the syllabus has to say:

"From weeks 2 through 9, students will document their autobiographical experience as Freshman at the University of Oregon through the creation of weekly "primary sources" recounting or capturing any experience they choose to reflect upon. Be creative and consider what future generations, 25, 50 or even 100 years from now would be most interested in learning about. For example, this may include information you would not consider historically significant—describing the inside of a classroom, interaction with faculty, cost of books, or an athletic event. Students are encouraged to capture only what they are comfortable sharing with the class and ultimately submitting to the University Archives for permanent retention. Students are also encouraged to submit ephemera along with their primary sources—game tickets, parking tickets, bookstore receipts, etc."

Duck's Obiter Dicta will serve these purposes and more as I also plan to record anything on the wide world of the internet that interests me, combining both a journal and blog to get something like a blournal. Yeah, I said it. A blournal.

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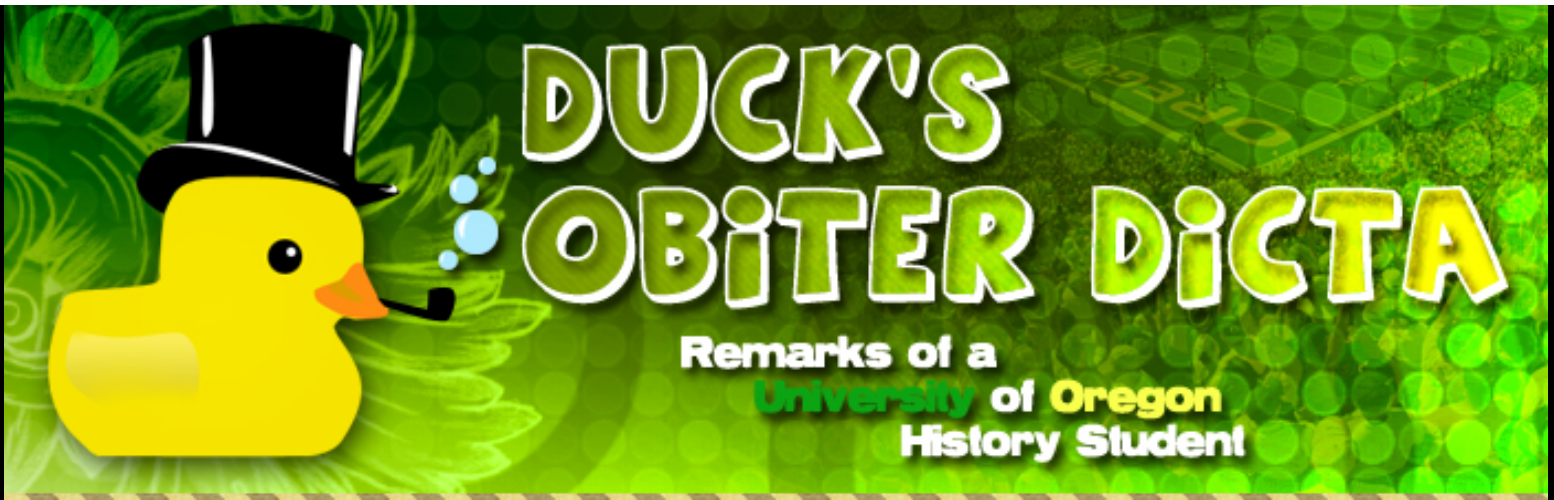
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Return to Normalcy
November 29, 2009, 9:54 pm
Filed under: [Uncategorized](#) | Tags: [Emerson](#), [UO](#)

I never really liked Harding but his slogan resonates with me tonight. What is it with Republicans and making up **words**?

I just returned from Cannon Beach. It was nice to get back to campus. Let me clarify; leaving the beach is never a rewarding experience but getting away from my family was (mainly extended). I won't elaborate here (look at the last post for that) but I will say it was really refreshing to get back to the University.

Maybe it's that my hair is home here. Maybe it's that I feel safe reading Richard Dawkins here. Or perhaps it's that this is my own world that I created independently from my family. I can try new things, new ideas - forge an identity that is different from the old one that is weighed down by 19 years of Catholic conservative shyness, one that is hated but necessary to pull on whenever I go to family functions. This is the cutting edge of my life now and it's the best part of being a college student.

I'm lucky to be here. Money, parents, time...still, after a year and half away since I first left home, I reminded that my friendships are what save me from my family, enhance my world, perpetuate it, make it rich, worthwhile. Though many are at home, every day at the University of Oregon leads me towards others.

So enough of my family – they no longer compose the majority of my narrative. I guess that's growing up. And its fine with me.

"A man's growth is seen in the successive choirs of his friends." - Ralph Waldo Emerson

It's good to be back.

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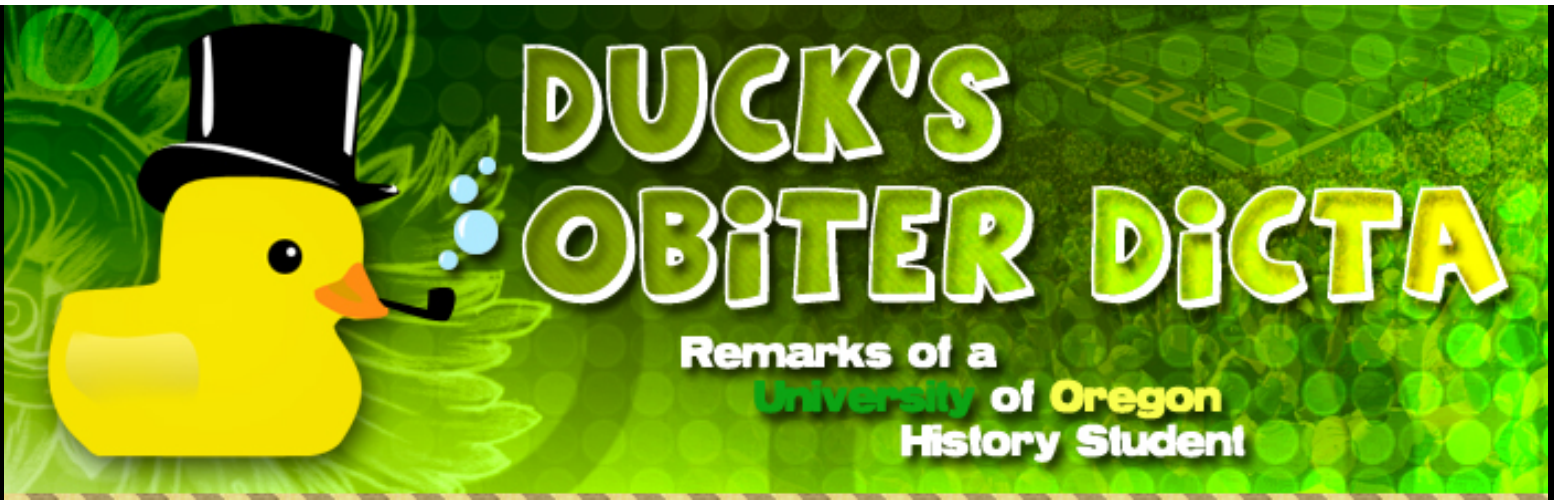
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A Thankless Thanksgiving
November 26, 2009, 10:04 pm
Filed under: [Activities](#) | Tags: [Cannon Beach](#), [Religion](#)

Well, that does it.

I normally look forward to Thanksgiving. Good food. Lots of time to read. Cannon Beach. All admirable things.

Not this year.

I comport myself as a quiet introvert whenever my extended family is around. They do not know who I am as a genuine individual (sometimes loud, argumentative, aloofness with a side of humor) nor do I want them to. That side of me no one really sees. At this point, it is not worth the time or the effort to try to convince people that who I am is worthwhile. Justifying myself just isn't worth it. I keep my head down and muddle through. Usually.

Additionally, I have a deeply ingrained sense of having to respect my elders – this is compounded my members of the family. When outrageous or shallow things are said, I feel it is not my place to correct it – easier to let these things slide. All of this is part of navigating my family.

My appearance came under fire during dinner.

"So how long are sporting this Jesus look?" I was asked sardonically. I looked up from my food, surprised and resigned – this wasn't going to go well. I had said nothing to prompt this caustic inquisitiveness, done nothing to prompt a discussion of my hair length. This was from a family member that has his preconceived ideas and corresponding contempt for Eugene. Obviously the hippies had got to me and I was going to have to have them exercised from me. Just why does this have to happen at dinner, I thought. Nothing I could say to this person was much use nor was I going to engage in my usual argumentative disposition. After all, he is an adult and a family member – I will have to see him again in the future.

"Jesus what?" I said.

"Your hair."

My mom laughed. "Like Matthew would want anything to do with the church." Oh god, I thought, not this. Don't bring up religion Mom. Not in front of these people, this long and venerable clan of Catholics. My grandfather, his children, their children - all Catholic. I would never hear the end of it if the truth came out about my abandonment of the church. So much for telling my Mom in confidence about my falling out. But fortunately I don't think anyone heard her.

"I'm told its more like Wolverine than Jesus." I replied.

"Do you ever think about your outward appearance?"

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Of course I do, I thought, but I could see where this was going. "Yes..."

"College is a new chapter in your life – this thing you got going on, it might just be a chapter in your appearance. And it might be time for that chapter to end."

Fuck that. I just smiled. I could imagine what my brother would have said if he had been there, clean shaven for the Army – respectable in the eyes of the family.

"Had any college adventures?" I was asked.

Being taken back to the 1960 presidential election by Ted Kennedy in his memoir or taking World War III to the streets of Invasion on Xbox Live with Dan and Daren or even looking up at the stars after reading Camus count as college adventures to me but to the more traditional mold of drinking and womanizing, these things undoubtedly were anomalous. See what I mean? No use in trying to explain myself.

"No. Not really."

"Any women?"

"Excuse me?"

"Do you think any girls on campus are attractive?"

"Of course."

"And no women?"

"No..."

"Maybe if you cut your hair..."

Oh please.

"Yeah. Maybe."

"I know some tricks. I can pass 'em down to you."

Keep them.

Infuriated at the notion that women were mine to be harvested from a crop of 22,000 students at school (how could I even begin to explain my contempt at the very idea?) or that any woman who could be won by a few "tricks" was what I was even looking for and hurt that my mom exposed to the group my frustration with my family's religion, I quickly ducked out and into hiding.

My recluse did not last long however before I was summoned out by my aunt. Mom wanted me to "present" my younger cousins with their Zig and Zag bags of princess themed play items. "And cousin Matthew is going to give them to you!" my mom said in her baby voice to the two girls.

Christ, I thought, no, please no. But too late. I was forced to present the bags to them in a hideously public fashion, complete with cameras and popping flashes. Hopefully my expression will forever sour those photos. I was merely trying to read a book and stay out of everyone's way because I was already in a bad mood – why couldn't my mom give them their goddamn presents and give me my space? Having me as a middle man was both stupid and pointless and served only to incense me further.

I left the house. I grabbed my jacket and flip flops and walked down the beach in the rain to get out of the suffocating house. I stood and looked out at the cold ocean and grey-black skies and wondered if I couldn't feel at home at Thanksgiving, then where could I? None of this

would have happened if I could have celebrated Thanksgiving with my friends instead of family. I felt for the first time the sincere desire to have dinner in the company of others not of my brood. Family seem to always treat you like a child.

I went back to the house, not wanting my persistent cold to be worsened. As I quietly enjoyed a slice of apple pie in silence, a different aunt and uncle arrived with their own dog. Molly and the new dog made contact – a cacophony of barking ensued, which was, truth be told, slightly less abrasive than the former aunt and uncle's two screaming and shrieking babies. Though I would have gladly taken the babies back when five minutes later I learned that the new dog had destroyed my favorite pair of flip flops that had just moment ago served me faithfully for the last time on the lonely walk down to the beach.

"I'm sorry – we'll buy you a new pair!"


"Don't worry about it – it's just a pair of flip flops."

But it was so much more.

4 Comments

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I'm terribly sorry to see what your weekend consisted of—you deserve much better. Though my immediate family is usually much better behaved on such holidays, my wife and I have taken to fleeing the area every Thanksgiving, and I have to say it's been a thoroughly successful experiment. I've had experiences like yours in semi-public situations (I can relate the most embittering of them over tea, if misery would, indeed, like a bit of company) involving family, though never quite as unrelenting as your day. As one of the friends who would have treated you with far more kindness and respect today, I hope you can remember us and what we value about you, and that such thoughts can mitigate somewhat the sting of the holiday. Talk to you soon!

Comment by jwrosenzweig November 28, 2009 @ 9:36 pm


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See, that sounds fantastic. A Thanksgiving flight.

I'll be home 'round the 10th – when are you done at UW? I was going to hopefully pay Almeera a visit and would love to intercept you.

Comment by mvilleneuve November 29, 2009 @ 9:18 pm

[Reply](#)



I can't remember when my last class is (the 10th, I believe), but I'm working on the 11th, 14th, 18th, and 21st in the Special Collections Library, and my shift will end between 1pm and 1:15pm each of those days. If one of them suits you, fantastic. :-) And if not, I promise to find a good time for us to meet and talk—it will be good for what ails us, I expect. Good luck finishing up with the quarter!

Comment by jwrosenzweig November 29, 2009 @ 9:37 pm

[Reply](#)

Alright, that sounds good. I'm aiming to come over to campus before the 15th, so maybe the 11th or 14th, I'll let you know. That'd be good. If I can

survive my finals...

Comment by mvilleeneuve November 30, 2009 @ 4:53 pm

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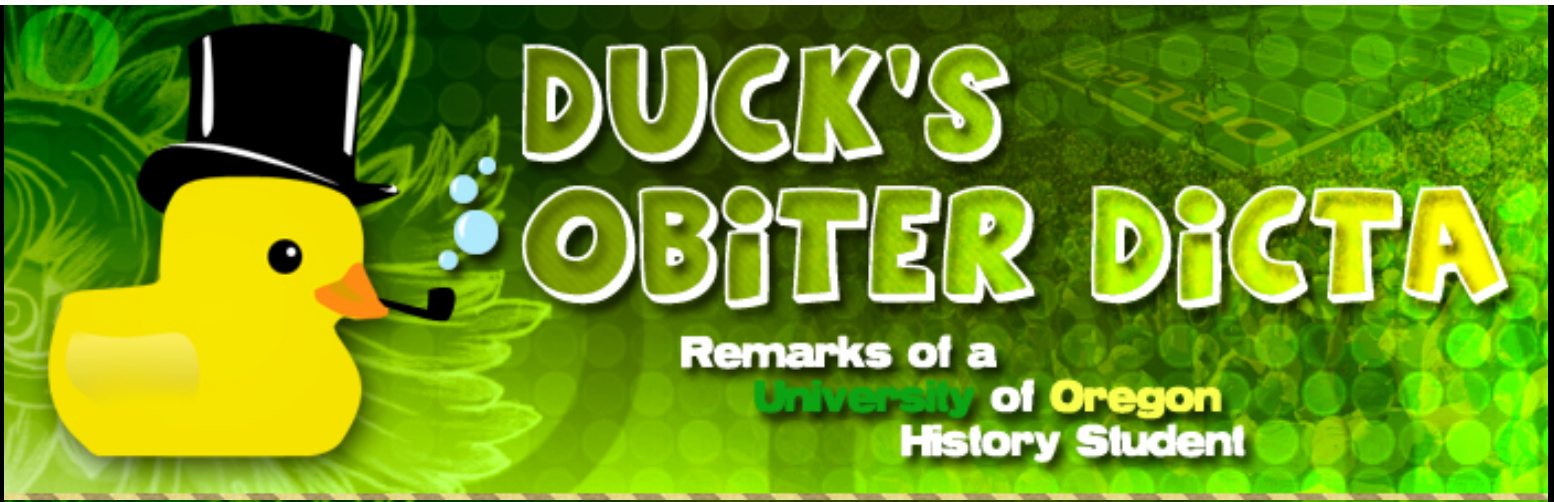
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How 'Bout Them Ducks?

November 23, 2009, 1:27 pm

Filed under: [Activities](#), [Arts](#) | Tags: [Art](#), [Ducks](#), [UO](#)

So that Arizona game was a squeaker. I can't recall every watching a more intense football game. My residents already go crazy everytime we score (complete with the fight song – thanks to Colin D, who has memorized it since age six or something equally ridiculous) so imagine what it must have been like when we made that last double overtime TD. Bedlam. It was pretty awesome.

It goes to the Civil War for the Rose Bowl. First time ever. Now THAT game is going to crazy.

I will include this link for anyone who has not seen it yet. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_hrjpe1VCNg Give it at least thirty seconds, it gets better.

In the meantime, here is a piece that reflects my current outlook:

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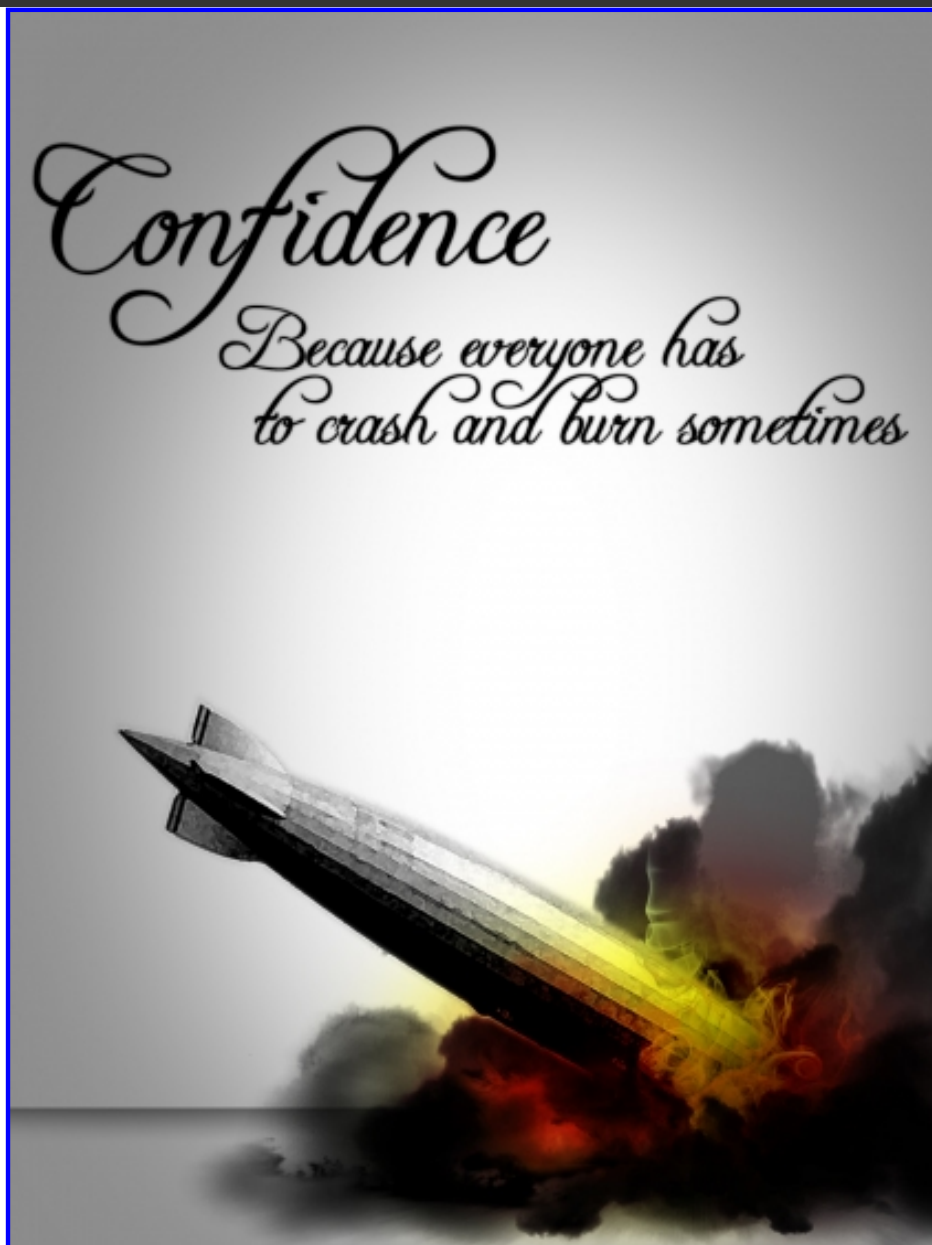
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“Oh, the humanity!” Have a great Oregon Coast Thanksgiving, Neustadt. I’ll see you soon, I hope.



Comment by jwrosenzweig November 23, 2009 @ 4:46 pm

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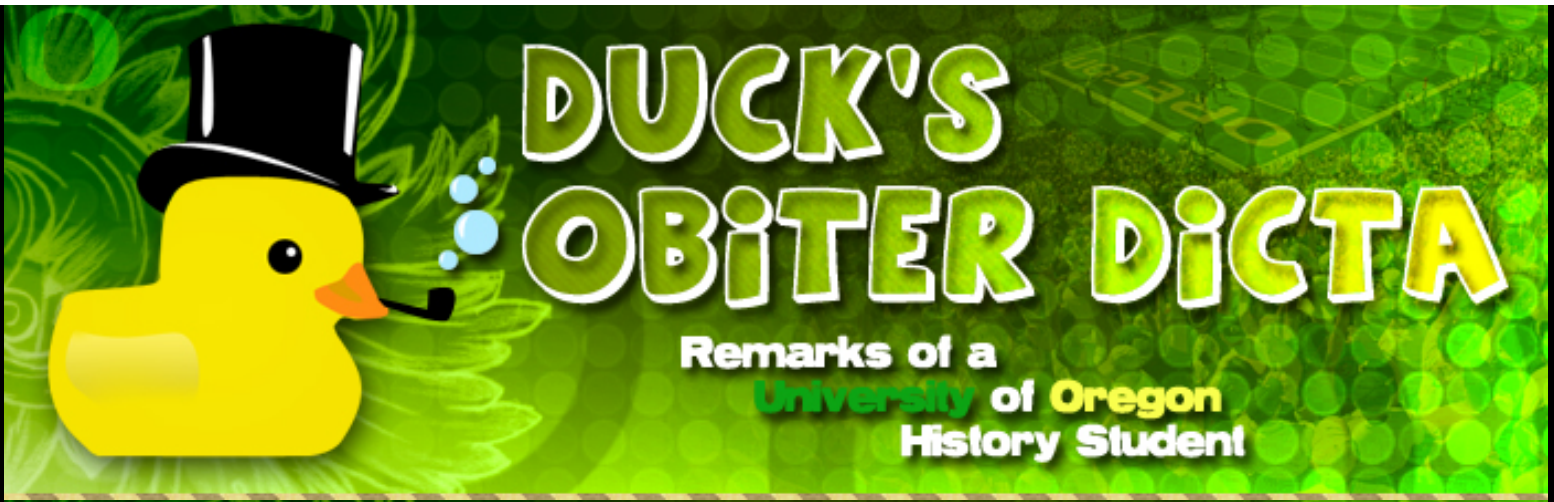
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Distractions

November 15, 2009, 5:36 pm

Filed under: [Activities](#), [Observations](#) | Tags: [Classes](#), [Philosophy](#)

I've been really distracted lately. Apart from dwelling in a trough on the wavelength of my emotions, I've been busy with school and...well, okay, I've been busy playing Call of Duty Modern Warfare 2. Let's be honest – Xbox Live is pretty sweet and shooting up the place with Dan and Daren has been what I would call "fun."

Still, I console playing is hardly a substitute for face to face time with my friends and I still feel somewhat low due to a lack of just that. To my chagrin, Shiva inadvertently (hopefully) compounded this frustration the other day when she said my console playing excessive and meaningless. "What's the point of spending so much time in a world that's all virtual?"

Indeed, with tone and connotations, "virtual" also became "juvenile, pointless and stupid" to this author. Nevermind that all of human life is pointless in light of the inevitability of death, I wanted to retort, using her logic against her, but I think this is fun. Sitting alone in my room with the lights off, music blaring and a headset atop my head and controller in hand is how I choose to spend my social time – it connects me with Dan, Daren and Andrew but also to Jensen back home...I'd say even though she doesn't understand the subtle pleasure of social gaming, it is still a legitimate use of my social time. I was hurt that even though she didn't share my perspective, she couldn't respect it.

And so I keep gunning and running.

Almeera turned 20 on the 9th. Amid the loneliness of winter life down here and the discussion in philosophy on the pointlessness of everything, it becomes clear to me that I need to strive to reconnect with Almeera on her terms. I think if she realized she was the standard to which all girls are compared, she might understand how large of a role she has and does play in my life. So I will endeavor this Christmas to reinforce and recalibrate our relationship. Today is also my mother's birthday as well. I called her and had a good talk. Nikki's is the 17th and for the first time, I am wondering about calling at all. The economics of application of emotional resources seems to suggest avoiding sinkholes.

I think I finally got a grasp on meaningless of life argument. I like Camus but I don't agree with his ideas. Here's what I wrote in my latest essay, sentiments that I feel cements my triumph over the proposed dissonance as an answer to the tribulations of living a mortal life:

"Though some find Camus' character Meursault as liberated from the meaningless trappings of human life, it is also apparent to that in order for Meursault to overcome the meaningless of human life, he must forsake it. This rings like the "Ben Tre logic" of the Vietnam War – that "it became necessary to destroy the town to save it." This does not resonate with many people."

It sure as hell doesn't resonate with me. And then, suddenly, a great weight is lifted.

And with that, I think I'm going to go play COD.

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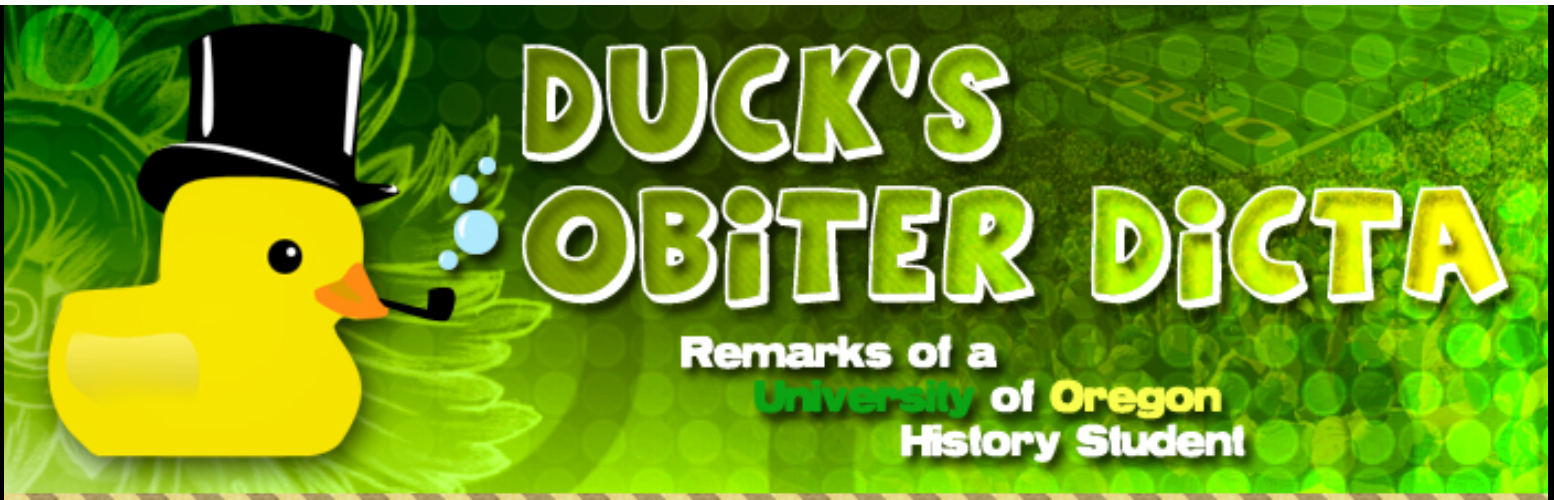
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A Friday to Forget

November 7, 2009, 3:38 am

Filed under: [Activities](#) | Tags: [Classes](#), [FIGs](#), [Philosophy](#)

What a day.

I met with the Kansas State University FYP delegation who are here to learn more about how to implement a FYP like ours. I put my foot in my mouth at least six times, not mention smearing my yogurt all over the place like a four-year old.

Then it was off to philosophy. Arthur Schopenhauer ruined my day.

Followed by this was AIQC. It went late and so I was subsequently late to philosophy discussion section.

Philosophy discussion section actually went well and then our GTF told us she doesn't believe life has any meaning either. I mean, I think I agree but man, when you're down, nothing runs you down more like remembering life probably has no meaning.

Folklore was next. The video on Folkdance was atrocious. I wanted to kill myself (Camus the absurdist says suicide is no way out – I smell a paradox). My meeting with Professor Fagan and our GTF did not contain happy news.

Undergraduate council beckon. I stuffed my face with some food and ran to library where I didn't contribute much, instead attempting to reform general education via doodles on my agenda in silence. Don't know what it will amount to but we'll see if I can't help change the world.

So then I thought, wow, what a day, I think I will watch a movie and chill out. Netflix conspired against me (or rather irony did so) and so I ended up with *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*. So I don't know if you've seen this film but it sure made Schopenhauer's thesis on suffering as the meaning of life sure look pretty real. Thanks.

So I hid in my room, all the while the moon rose over the LLC, past the cranes of Matthew Knight, hidden by a shroud of fast-moving black clouds, dancing over the moon like a polished stone in a river bed. Really bright, very striking. Then the grey rain clouds rolled in and consumed everything, sending Eugene back into its dull veil for God knows how long.

Fitting.

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It sounds like a rough day—you have my sympathies. And Schopenhauer rarely makes a bad day better, in my opinion. Your GTF's statement on the meaninglessness of life seems ill-timed as well. Rough. This is one of the many reasons why I can't accept the idea of the meaninglessness of life—even if it were true, it strikes me as unhelpful to adopt it as a philosophy. This isn't Pascal's wager... it's just that, well, consider a hypothetical. Consider that you're on Apollo 13, and it turns out that the engines don't have enough power to bring you home. Or that the heat shield is so damaged that you are destined to burn up on re-entry. I think I'd rather spend those last days aboard the Odyssey working to fix things, and do what I could to prepare for a return home—if it was hopeless, I don't think I'd want to know. I'd rather not drift aimlessly through space, waiting for starvation and asphyxiation—I want to go down guns blazing even if it turns out those guns aren't loaded, or my enemy is immune to their effects. I suppose not everyone feels that way, but I do. It's not my only philosophical position, but it's the one that makes me unsusceptible to becoming like Camus and the rest (although I think they have a lot of valuable and perceptive things to say, when I read them).



I hope your Saturday picked up a bit, and that Sunday will be better still. Enjoy Veterans Day and the time off from school it will surely grant you.

Comment by jwrosenzweig November 7, 2009 @ 8:49 pm

[Reply](#)

I'm with you – I have a hard time believing life is truly meaningless. If we further refine that statement, I do agree with Schopenhauer or Camus in that there is no overlying force like fate or God that sends us through life with meaning or creates a reason for why we are here, nor does it send us on a particular mission through life. I'm no subscriber to fate. Now, that being said, I think I do believe in God (or divinity at least) and my thought on meaning is analogous to the tired cliché that the journey is the destination, that we'll never reach the destination of ultimate truth in life but rather it is in the process of living our way there that we find meaning.



My thoughts about the heat shield are exactly the same as yours; I'll go through the motions of reentry with you, even if we're screwed. Leaving ourselves to float around until we die just seems wrong. Yet to play Devils advocate, doesn't admitting that life has no meaning release you from caring that the heat shield is busted? That if you can let go of the fact life has no meaning and come to terms with that, a feeling that borders on acceptance might set in. Like Thomas Nagel suggests, waving our hands in defiance of the meaningless like Sisyphus in Camus' essay seems dramatic and romantic (though personally appealing) and if we can embrace this sense of meaningless with irony and appreciation, we can live without it.

Comment by mvilleneuve November 9, 2009 @ 11:16 am

[Reply](#)

We really need to have these conversations in person over a nice mug of tea—remind me when you're coming home in December! But I'll offer a couple quick replies (and try to hold my natural long-windedness in check).



I like the way you're processing this stuff, and I think what you're digging into is an interesting philosophical attitude. Let me know which of the folk you read seems most like a fellow traveler to you, since I'm intrigued.

I guess I'd argue that accepting the meaninglessness of life might release me from caring about the heat shield, but it also releases me from caring. It releases me from engagement with the world. It turns philosophy into what Socrates' critics thought it was—mindless sophistry—instead of making it what he believed it ought to be, a sort of daring attempt to get our arms far enough around the world to embrace it. I think the image of three people sitting aboard Apollo 13 saying "life is meaningless, therefore, it does not trouble us that we will never return to earth — all existence is composed of moments, and this is merely one of them. Soon it will end, which will leave us no better or worse off than before" strikes me as humans drained of their humanity.

In short, we can dismiss "drama" and "romance" as merely personally appealing feelings. But I'm not sure we ought to dismiss them. And I'm not sure that something being emotional rather than rational is a huge problem. But now I'm making this longer than I'd intended to. :-) I hope classes go well this week!

Comment by jwrosenzweig November 9, 2009 @ 2:43 pm

[Reply](#)



Again, I think I agree — Apollo 13 astronauts sitting idle embracing their deaths seem to me more like a failure of humanity than a transcendence of it — it hardly seems a liberation from the confines of a falsely meaningful existence and more like, as you put it, "drained of their humanity."

But what then is humanity? What is it then that these astronauts, resigned to die, have forfeited? Is it human to deceive ourselves that life DOES have meaning? Is being human really about duping ourselves? As Tolstoy writes (albeit in a different context) "a person could only live so long as he was drunk; but the moment he sobered up, he could not help seeing that all that was only a deception, and a stupid deception at that." Or is merely the will to live that has been surrendered?

That being said, Tolstoy does NOT resonate with me. John Dewey's A Common Faith has been my favorite so far. I will keep you posted — I too agree that tea and the conversation it seems to bring is in order. I'll be home hopefully the first half of December.

What are your plans for Thanksgiving?

Comment by mvilleneuve November 9, 2009 @ 3:11 pm



I think your question about what it means to be human is too big to answer well. But I'd suggest that, rather than deceit, it is human to be aware of our existence, it is human to value our own existence, and it is human to take action in the universe to preserve ourselves. But I'm not sure that's exactly right, or good enough.

Think of the Light Brigade. That charge was disastrous, stupid, and doomed to utter failure. But it doesn't lack humanity. Were those soldiers duping themselves? I don't think so. But their willingness to go to death for duty, knowing it would accomplish nothing, strikes me as very human.

John Dewey, eh? Interesting. I haven't read him in 15 years, I think, or close to it. Thanksgiving we will spend on Whidbey Island this year, and not down in Oregon as in previous years (saving a little money by going to the family cabin, which I haven't been to in a long time). So, out of town until Saturday night of that weekend. I assume you'll be back in the neighborhood of Cannon Beach?

Comment by jwrosenzweig November 11, 2009 @ 12:43 pm

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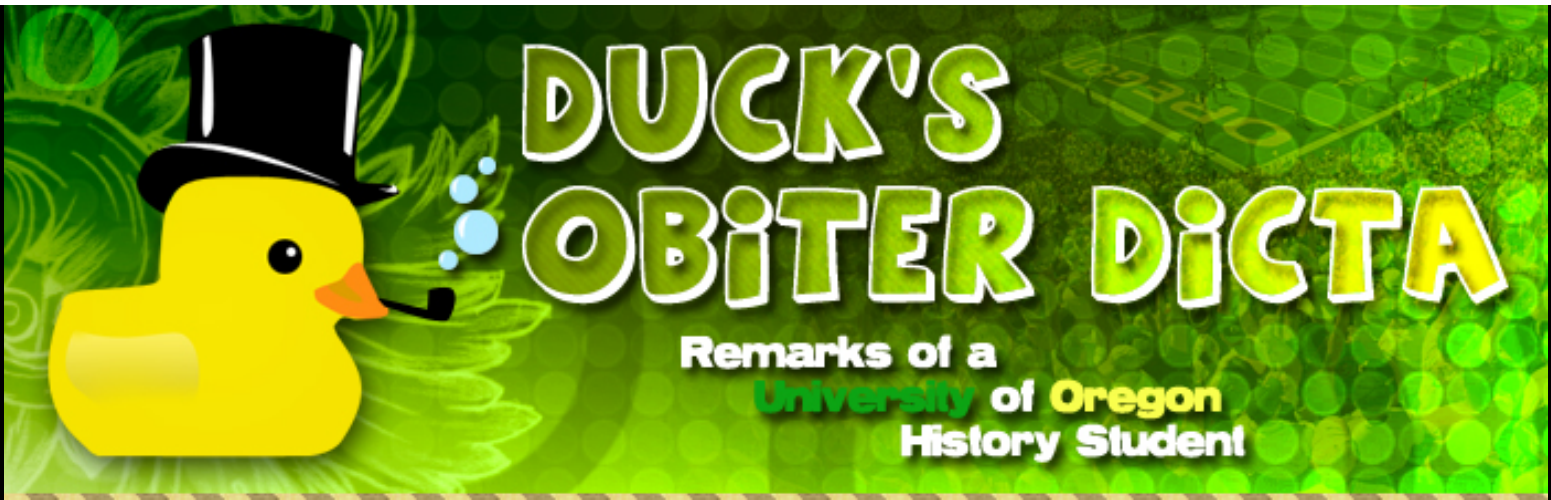
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A Stranger

November 4, 2009, 12:27 pm

Filed under: [Observations](#) | Tags: [Classes](#), [Philosophy](#)

I just got back from Philosophy. Wonderful class – makes you think. One of the few.

We actually just finished reading *The Stranger* by Albert Camus. I liked it, though in a way only possible if reading it as assigned material. If I picked it up on my own, I would have been irritated at Meursault's aloofness and pissed at Camus for making his life and his book seem pointless.

But because I read it and debriefed it in class, I rather enjoyed the dissonance of Meursault, the lackadaisical attitude that normally leaves me incensed when I encounter it, in both literature and in real life. Characters that act dangerously irrationally or pathetically illogically drive me up the wall, but by the end of the novel, I felt a twinge of affection for Meursault; he holds on to his integrity in his encounters with the priest and gives him a pretty good send off. That on top of Celeste's solidarity in the trial and I'd say Meursault, like all good characters, undergoes true change from page one.

The only problem with all this is the timing of our reading of the book. Recovering from sickness, midterms and on the eve of Thanksgiving, I'm a little worn down and feeling a bit disconsolate.

"For everything to be consummated, for me to feel less alone, I had only to wish there be a large crowd of spectators the day of my execution and that they greet me with cries of hate."

Needless to say, this is both incredible dark and oddly inspiring. Validation before death. Brief harmony before ultimate diffusion.

That's the problem with philosophy - it is both motivating and deflating. One minute you think that life has meaning and can be rewarding, like wandering an orchard of fruit ripe for the picking, and the next you are reminded that death looms like a dark brick wall at the terminus of our lives and our we are essential drivers asleep at the wheel. Charming, right? What a skitz.

But regardless of this duality, I wish there was someone who took that class with me, that was in the same place in my life as I am, that really connected, really cared about these questions as much as I do. A person to discuss the apparently pointlessness of life with on the way back from class, debate the merits of a theistic God whilst on a walk through Alton Baker, tangle with human morality over dinner and a movie.

And maybe through analysing that desire, I realize that like the all these issues themselves, my feelings are both nugatory and yet hopeful. Like life. So I take comfort that my experience is congruent with the greater system of life, even if it does little to address the disquiet of my longing.

Cannon

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If it's any consolation, I wish I was taking the class with you—I'm not in the same place in life as you are, but I think we'd have really interesting conversations about it regardless. It sounds like you're doing some first-rate thinking and questioning, which is really exciting, honestly, and I hope you find some people to chat with about it. Camus (who I've read little of) sounds pretty intense. I'm a little more familiar (only slightly, honestly) with Sartre. It's an interesting school of thought: limited, in my experience, but incredibly powerful within those limits. Like a flashlight, that shines with full intensity on a single aspect (or maybe a closely grouped set of aspects) of human existence. Are you expected to write about Camus? To compare him with other thinkers? Where is the class "going"?



Comment by jwrosenzweig November 6, 2009 @ 8:21 pm

[Reply](#)

Indeed, I'm enjoying it very much, despite its subject matter running me down all the time. In the short term, it gets old hearing how life is pointless and it's all a joke but in the long run I can feel the ship that are my beliefs slowly turning. For the better.



I've never read Sartre. What's he say?

We'll write about Camus at the end of this section. We read The Stranger and I'm down with the message therein but I'm trying to get my head around absurdism and his essay on Sisyphus.

Our class is structured around units – reason, faith, absurdity and being. Fun times.

Comment by mvilleneuve November 7, 2009 @ 3:41 am

[Reply](#)

Your beliefs turn? May I ask, how so? What influences you right now?



Sartre....oh, it's been forever since I read that piece by him. Let me think... crap, I read this piece by him in my existentialist philosophy book, but I can't find the book and my mind's drawing a blank. He believed that people are condemned to be free, I remember that. Kind of a downer, even when he was being perceptive. But the existentialists aren't exactly party animals, generally speaking.

The units are interesting. Who will you read for "being"?

Comment by jwrosenzweig November 7, 2009 @ 8:42 pm

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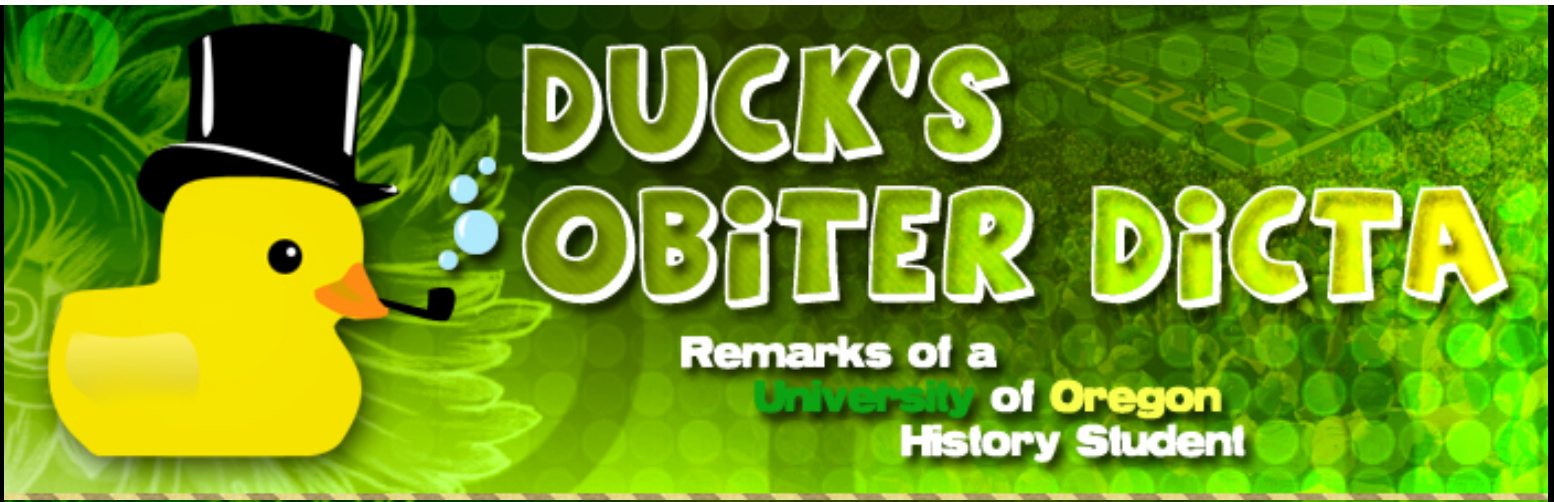
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A Quiet Halloween
November 1, 2009, 8:50 pm
Filed under: [Activities](#) | Tags: [Residence Life](#)

I published this on the duty log with Jenny and Samir. Fun times.

As Masoli walked over the USC defense like a one man offense for the last time in the fourth quarter, Andrew and I looked at each other.

Andrew: That's it. We won.

Matt: Yeah and now tonight is going to be crazy.

Andrew: No kidding.

But it wasn't. Tonight I mean: residents were actually pretty quiet. But from the horror stories I've heard (excuse the pun) about rounds on Halloween, I decided to lend myself to the effort. After all, that Dance Magic trophy comes with some serious responsibility so what the hell. Oregon football was the topic of choice as I joined Samir and Jenny on the 5th floor.

Samir: Let me tell you, that LeMichael James, he's so fast – our team is sooo fast!

Matt: I know it, I don't even really want Blount back. I prefer the speed.

We were talking football when we stumbled upon a hall on the fourth floor that was covered in as strange plant like substance. So of course, Samir picked it up and smelled it, exactly what anyone would do with a foreign subject; jam it into your face.

Matt: Is that weed?

Samir: Nope.

And good thing too. The whole hall was littered with it. If it had been weed, there would have been at least half a kilo on the ground. Apparently some resident had been making a costume that required copious amounts of moss and then left without cleaning it up. Dumb.

I lagged behind as we descended through Carson. I came around the wing where Samir and Jenny were out on their way out. I caught the tail end of an exchange:

Samir: You are a racist!

Jenny: I am not! I'm Asian!

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I didn't ask but I thought the Asian defense was pretty good. Samir laughed as he danced his way through Carson. Using her pathways, Jenny held the door open for me.

Matt: Thank you si....

I trailed off.

Jenny: What was that you were going to say?

Matt: What? Nothing.

Jenny: No way, you were going to say Thank you Sir. I'm not a man!

Matt: I was not!

Jenny: Do not lie to me Matt.

Matt: Yeah...okay, but its not like I think you are a man or anything, its not a referendum on your sexuality...

That is the problem with words; you cant take them back. I stopped talking. Jenny stopped at a residents door and said hello. She returned the salutation and then turned to her roommate.

Resident A: Are you wearing any pants?

Resident B: No, I am most certainly not.

I kept walking. Let's just say there are things I do not want to experience on rounds and naked residents are one of them.

On the way out of Carson, Jenny hit the handicapped button that opens the door automatically. I love those things; I call them VIP buttons. Samir looked seriously at Jenny.

Samir: Those are not for you. You are not disabled.

Only Samir. I found that funny. I guess I should stop using handicapped bathrooms now. Samir wouldn't approve.

On the way to McClure, we saw two DPS officers chillin in an ATV. Naturally, Jenny approached them.

Jenny: So I don't suppose some RAs could get a ride in that?

DPS: Where do you want to go?

Jenny: Just around sometime.

DPS: Come back and we'll talk.

When we came back, they were gone. Jerks.

McClure was quiet expect for some residents who were very infatuated with Samir. Along the way, Samir sang his version of Katy Perry's I Kissed A Girl to a moving rendition of I Kissed A Guy. (But have you ever kissed a guy? Asked Jenny. No, no, no – except my dad, answered Samir. That doesn't count, I added. The song went on – The details don't seem to stop Samir.)

We ran into a resident who stormed the field tonight. He said he slapped LeMichael James on the butt for a job well done.

Resident: It was awesome.

Jenny: What was it like? Firm or squishy?

Resident: It was firm.

Matt: That's enough.

Indeed, it was enough. Nothing else happened of note. We chilled in the Carson lobby trying to figure out why we had lost an hour (it took us about an hour to figure it out). Two high school girls were lost and a guy lost his wallet. I'd say it that's a pretty good tally for one Halloween. And I learned even more this time around – Samir's never kissed a guy, Jenny's licked a foot once (ask her) and LeMichael has a firm butt.

Kick ass.

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Infiltration

October 29, 2009, 12:12 pm

Filed under: [Observations](#) | Tags: [FIGs](#), [UO](#)

My mom tells me that, as much as I pursue the flawed notion of trying to be perfect, I sometimes minimize my success. Like becoming an FA, for example. She told me to metaphorically take the day off to celebrate. I smiled and just kept doing my homework. But today I took pause for a moment when I saw the cover of the Oregon 2020 plan. There was me, a lowly sophomore from out of state who is struggling to find his place at school, on the cover. I didn't waste any time replicating DECA, huh? I just kept my head down and somehow I earned a speaking part next to a Provost and the ASUO president in a presentation to the Board of Trustees. It's not dinner with a pretty girl, but hey, I'll take it.

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Congratulations, Matt! A well-deserved honor—I'm curious to hear what your contributions have been so far, or what your role might be in this process.



Comment by jwrosenzweig October 29, 2009 @ 7:28 pm

[Reply](#)

Lol, I just talked about my FIG and then begged for money.



Comment by mvilleneuve October 29, 2009 @ 9:55 pm

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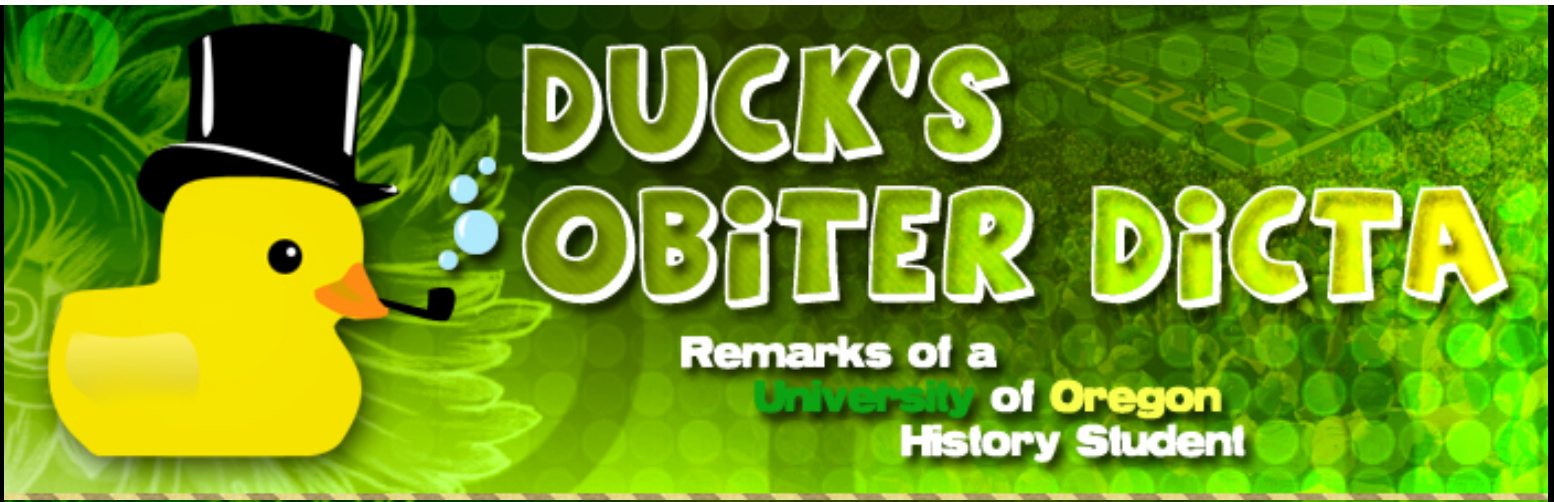
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Manners and Justice – We Have Neither Here

October 27, 2009, 12:36 pm

Filed under: [Observations](#) | Tags: [Philosophy](#), [Residence Life](#)

I was hungry. Iris and I went off campus to Value Village costume hunting for Halloween when she mentioned she was hungry as well.

“Oh there’s going to be pizza at the Silence of the Lambs program.” I said. She was ecstatic.

“Now I don’t have to spend any points!”

Well, we showed up to the LLCPH with what seemed was everyone and their brother. We took our seats when Hannah let everyone go for pizza. There was at least 15 boxes and at least 100 people. I figured I would wait so as to not fight the crowd. Besides, I was a member of AIQC, so I thought it was only polite to let our guests get food first. By this time my stomach was growling as the movie began. I hadn’t eaten since lunch at noon and it was 7:00. That pizza was going to be good. After all, I had been thinking about it since Value Village almost an hour earlier.

The line had dwindled down by the time I made my move. As I got up, I saw two male residents enter the LLCPH from the hallway – they weren’t attending the program. They made their way over to the pizza boxes, loaded up with the free food, and promptly left. I reached the boxes as the door closed behind them and saw to my horror they were empty. Empty.

Those goddamn freeloaders came in from the LLC to poach the food from AIQC and then left without the common decency to attend our program, leaving me and my stomach outraged and with a very real feeling of emptiness.

Idealism is dead.

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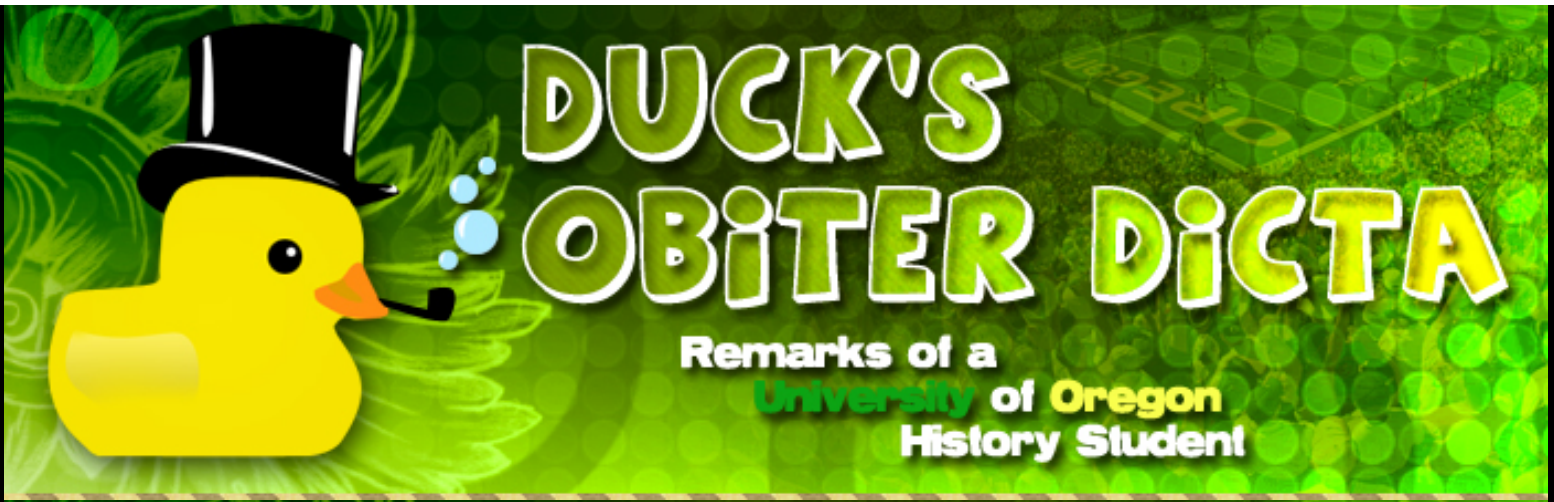
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Rounds Report
 October 25, 2009, 5:42 pm
 Filed under: [Activities](#) | Tags: [Residence Life](#)

I kept Shiva up until 4:00am writing this. It was fun.

The hall was quiet, alcohol free and smelled weed-less. Boring.

I joined Shiva and Kofi to see some action, not to pace the halls of Carson and Earl until 3:00am. So naturally I got bored and became, as Shiva would say, "obnoxious." (Whatever, I say when you get a chance to further a relationship with a friend, a significant other or even your co, I recommend doing so, no matter how insignificant what you learn may be. After all, college only lasts four years. This means asking a lot of questions.)

"Shiva?"

"What do you want?" she glared.

"Okay Shiva, so you're out exploring in the Amazon jungle, hiking through the rainforest-"

"I hate hiking. I would never do this."

"Shiva, listen to me, that's not the point. So you're wandering in the Amazon and you come upon a remote village. In the village, a militant group has taken over the village. The commander approaches you and tells you how pleased he is to have you in his village."

"This is stupid."

"Give me a chance! So, he's pleased to see you. It just so happens that he is going to execute ten villagers for stealing from his private stores. But because you've stumbled upon the village and you're a guest of honor, he offers that if you take the gun and shoot one of the villagers, he will let the other nine go alive. What would you do?"

She fell silent for a moment.

"Don't roll your eyes at me Shiva."

"I'm not. I'm thinking."

"Oh, that's a first."

"Shut up. I would take the gun and shoot the commander and then split."

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"Shiva (exasperated) that's not the point. You can't do that."

"Then I would take the gun and shoot one of the villagers."

"How would you choose?"

"I'd shoot the oldest one."

That makes sense.

Kofi laughed.

"What's up Kofi? What would you do?"

He turned and looked at me.

"I would shoot the one who cried the most."

Jesus.

"Oh. Okay. Wow."

Shiva laughed hysterically but I wasn't so sure.

We went down the stairwell in Carson.

"Okay, I've got another one," I offered, "this time you're stuck on a desert island. You have no food and water. There's an old man with you-

"I would eat him."

"Shiva, wtf?! That is not appropriate! I didn't even ask the question yet!"

"What?! I thought that was the question!"

Both disgusted and amused, we went to Earl. On the fourth floor of Morton, we saw several girls dressed in red pajamas standing in a doorway. Being the outgoing guy he is, Kofi said hello.

"Uh, hi." They replied. They exchanged nervous glances. We walked closer.

"You guys having a red party?" asked Kofi, smiling. It was an innocent question - two girls wearing all red at 2:00am - it makes sense.

Looking as if Kofi had asked where they had hidden the body, they practically bolted into the room and slammed the door on his face before he even finished the question. Shiva and I burst out laughing, as Kofi turned to us with a hurt look on his face.

"Talk about pleading the 5th!"

On the second floor of Sheldon, Shiva stopped for a drink at the drinking fountain. She bent down and the water hit her face.

"Do you drink from your nose?" asked Kofi. Another good question.

"Go away Matt, I can't do this if you're watching me."

"I'm just trying to help."

"Stop it!"

We moved on. When we were about to leave the next floor, Shiva stopped at a room, which was emanating the loud sounds of freshman girls. She knocked on the door and told them to shut the hell up (but in politer terms). As we walked away, Kofi grinned.

"Just because we told them to be quiet doesn't mean they'll stop being noisy."

So we stayed put and sure enough, thirty seconds later, one of the girls opened their door and almost ran smack into Kofi, who hadn't moved an inch. She squealed and yelled, "He's still HERE!" and put the door between her and Kofi as quickly as possible.

I laughed, trying to replicate the sound she had made but my male anatomy prevented me from exact replication.

Back in Sheldon, Tesia came out of her room to say hello. It seemed like she came out in a hurry as to not to miss us. Subsequently, she had jammed her feet into her shoes, her heels folding the lip of her shoes inward, in the kind of way we all do when we're wearing our shoes temporarily. As Shiva and Kofi said hello and a conversation unfolded, she reinserted her feet in her shoes properly so as not to ruin them.

You can learn a lot about people on rounds. To me, it seems Tesia cares enough about her shoes to wear them in a way as to not damage them but is also willing to jam them on in order to talk to the RAs on duty. That kind of thing means a lot to me – I find that telling. Kofi apparently scares freshman girls. Shiva would eat an old man if she had the chance. There's no end to what you can discover when you have a captive audience for three hours.

And as for me? I guess you learned that I'll go on rounds if you ask. So ask - maybe you'll learn something too.

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Matthew, I think out of fairness you have to answer the question about the villagers. And I think you and Shiva should also decide if you would shoot nine to save the tenth.



And before you ask, I wouldn't have shot the villager. I am glad you're having fun, though. :-) Shiva, Kofi, and Matt...if that isn't a beautiful depiction of the American melting pot in three names, I don't know what is. You sound like a fun crew. :-)

Comment by jwrosenzweig October 25, 2009 @ 6:49 pm

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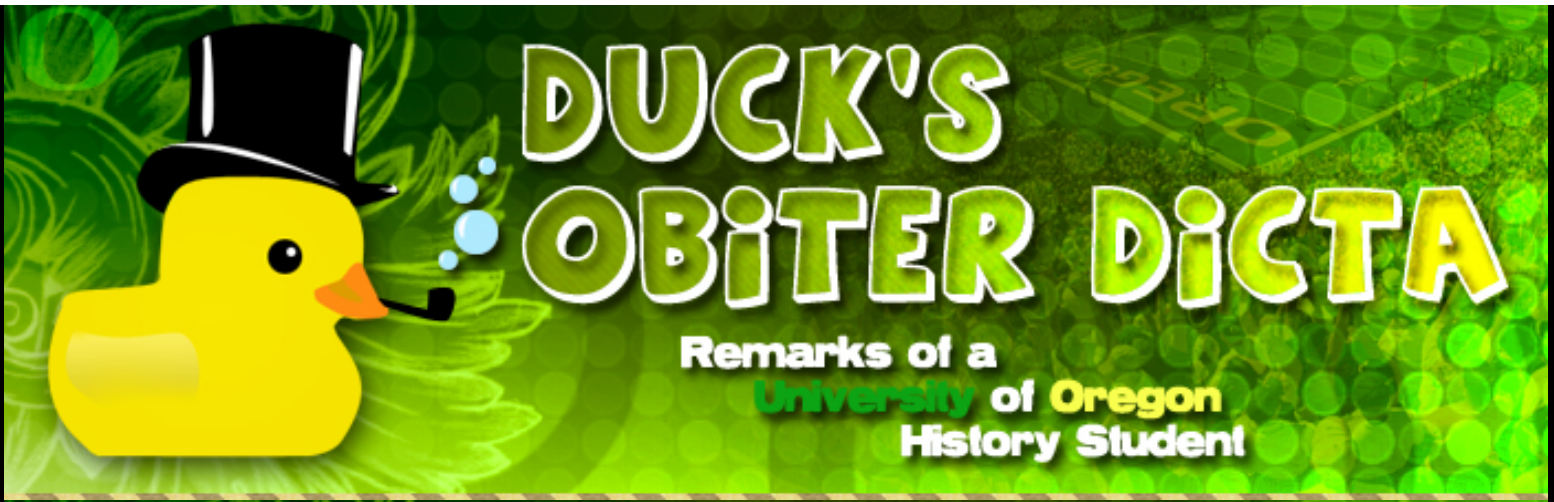
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Eye to the Sky: Fate and Destiny
 October 21, 2009, 2:25 pm
 Filed under: [Observations](#) | Tags: [Philosophy](#), [Religion](#)

Aggggh. It appears upon waking up that my left-most eye is bloodshot as hell. Yep, it is. There's even a bit of swelling. What the hell did I do to deserve this?

Maybe it's because I forgot to do all my reading for Philosophy. Well, okay, I didn't forget, I just overlooked a part of it. William James' "The Will to believe" was neglected last night and subsequently I learned a lot about it today in class.

Professor Johnson walked us through one of James' assertions; that faith is something that needs to be momentous in one's life. It needs to be important. It needs to be acted upon. We should believe even in the absence of factual/empirical proof. Did I mention this guy is in the God column?

Anyway, Johnson identified what I thought was James most interesting passage: "Do you like me or not?" for example. Whether you do or not depends, in countless instances, on whether I meet you half-way, am willing to assume that you must like me and show you trust and expectation. The previous faith on my part in your liking's existence is in such cases what makes your liking come." Reality is not fixed or given – what you do has an influence on how reality turns out.



Nathaniel Poe or Hawkeye,

BAMF

Johnson explained it in this way: In the film Last of the Mohicans, Daniel Day Lewis and company flees the site of the Mohawk/Huron ambush by hiding under a waterfall. Lewis tells his love interest whatsherface Cora Munro that upon their imminent capture by the warparty, he will split and then come back to rescue her. "You will survive," he tells her. "You will." Indeed, Mr. Lewis does come back to rescue her and, unlike her little sister, she does survive.

An excellent movie. But an excellent philosophical maxim? I mean, let's roll with the Mohicans example. This is what Johnson used as an example in class. But I am compelled to wonder, is Cora's life really preserved by the utterance of a mere words? Does that *really* make any difference whatsoever? Who cares if Nathaniel or Cora really believe it? So what if they do? What if Magua was pissed as hell and had a bad morning and had his blood up, would it really make any difference if Nathaniel told her she would live? My money is on Magua splitting her skull with a tomahawk.

It all comes back to destiny. Do I believe I have a destiny, a fate, that no matter what I do, I am bound to? No, I don't. But I do think I have a direction, a path, one that has been forged by my personality, a course that has been plotted by what makes me happy and fulfilled. Like going into the humanities, for example – I think that's a direction I'll move towards in my life because it's rewarding to me.

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To quote another film, the Last Samurai (we seem to have a theme of the last of a dying people as a source of philosophy here) Katsumoto asks Nathan if he believes in destiny, more so if it is his fate to die in the imminent battle. Nathan replies, "I think a man does what he can until his destiny is revealed to him." We control our life until destiny happens. Substitute "destiny" with "death" and I think we're on to something.

2 Comments



Nathan Algren, another
BA

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I take your point, but I think William James is onto something. There is truth, isn't there, in the notion that a human being must believe in something to make it happen? Not in a fixed way—I'm not saying that someone can disbelieve in gravity and therefore fly. But how many times in military history has sheer will and confidence served to bring about a remarkable victory? How many times has the larger, better equipped force lost due to a lack of morale? Faith, that is, the unsubstantiated but assured confidence in the unknowable (or something like that... defining it is darn hard), has some mysterious but undeniably powerful influence on the human mind. There have been some interesting studies, as I recall, on how much more difficult even simple tasks become when subjects have been given some blow to their confidence. Where I don't know I can follow William James is the idea that this necessarily supports the notion of faith in metaphysical things — how does he connect it to the importance of faith in God?



Comment by jwrosenzweig October 21, 2009 @ 11:07 pm
[Reply](#)

See, I don't know. I certainly beleive in confidence. And for sure, confidence can and has made all the difference in military history. But confidence is internal — if I'm confident, I can still lose, trust me, I know. And while being confident internally can make me play better than if I was not confident at all, that doesn't make confidence a gateway emotion to fate or destiny.



Okay, here is another example. Let's say there's this girl I have a crush on. Let's also say she is older than me and subsequently has her own set of friends and established social practices/habits. In short, its going to be tough for me to make a meaningful impression. So let's say after a long while, I summon the courage and confidence to ask her out — and she says no. James would suggest that here I am faced with a choice in which to alter fate; I can resign myself to rejection or I can persue this girl until I'm successful. That's how I influence destiny.

This I agree with. But only through action rather than faith or belief. If I got rejected the first time and then try again with more charm or charisma and succeed, I would attribute the success to the increased charm or charisma, not because I told myself, "I will be successful." If we were empircally testing this, I could tell myself I was going to fail miserably (which I do often) and then suprisingly succeed. So if you can still succeed without faith or confidence, what is the importance of faith or confidence in determining fate? I say little.

As for where James connects this to the metaphysical remains to be seen. I will get back to you after my next lecture!

Comment by mvilleneuve October 22, 2009 @ 9:21 am
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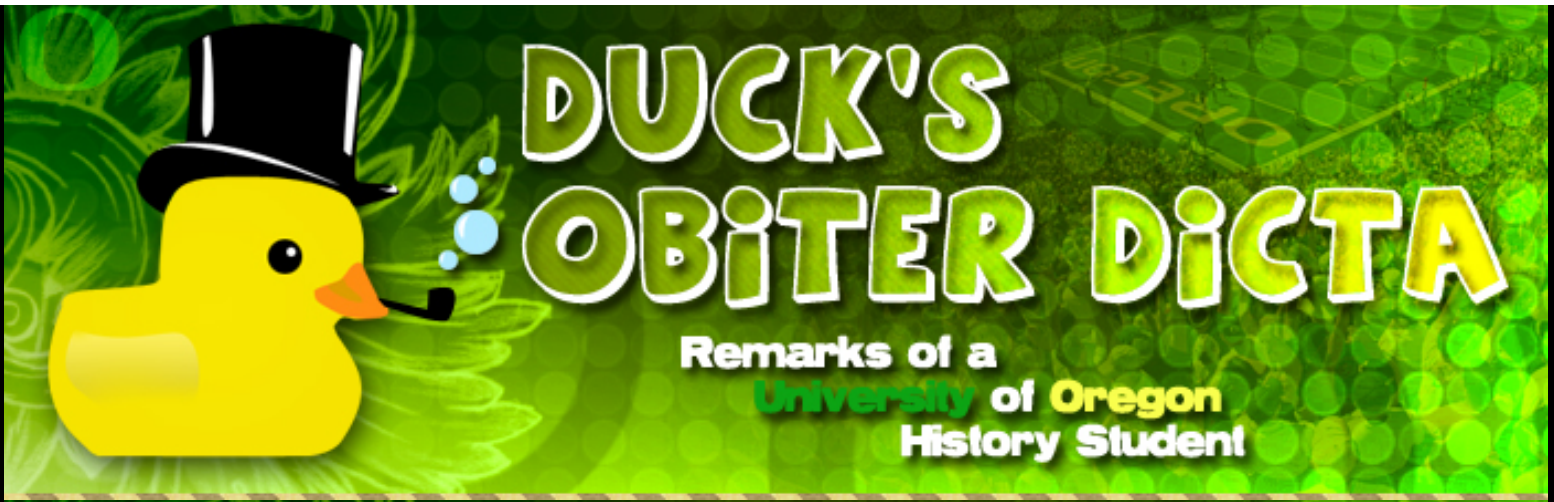
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The Examined Life
October 18, 2009, 12:39 am
Filed under: [Uncategorized](#) | Tags: [Classes](#)

“Are you Matt Villenauva?”

“Whaa-what?”

“Are you Matt Villenauva, the sophomore history major?”

“Yes?”

“You’re from Oregon?”

“Washington – the far away land of Seattle, actually. How can I help?”

“No, I just wanted to say that your paper was *excellent*.”

“Oh. Oh, well...(laughs nervously)”

“Yeah, I was thumbing through the stack of essays and I saw yours; ‘Socrates lived a life predicated on reason’ and I was like, ‘Yes!’ (laughs)”

“Ah, well, I do what I can, thank you... I was meaning to ask, I haven’t be able to turn it in electronically. What should I do? Am I going to lose points?”

“Don’t worry about it – you’ll be getting full marks, believe me.”

“Oh. Okay. Great. Thank you. Have a good one then?”

“You too!”

Affirmation of skills oft in doubt always feels good. =P

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Well done, Neustadt! So, was this the prof or a TA? And what was the central argument of your paper?



Comment by jwrosenzweig October 18, 2009 @ 1:46 pm

[Reply](#)

GTF. The prompt was something like "Describe Socrates' claim that the unexamined life is not worth living. What is the significance of self-examination?" or something like that. Pretty basic but hey, I'll take it.



Comment by mvilleneuve October 18, 2009 @ 5:19 pm

[Reply](#)

For a second I thought GTF was some kind of rude acronymic response...I wondered if I'd said something wrong. But then I theorized that U of O may call their TAs "Graduate Teaching Fellows" or something similar....am I right? Or were you telling me to f— off?



Interesting essay topic, even if it is basic. It reminds me of a concept called "monitoring" or "self-monitoring" that my former philosophy professor used—we read a book called "Thinking With Concepts" by a fellow named Wilson who was big on the idea. I hadn't thought much about the fact that it was merely an elaboration on Socrates, but that thought's occurred to me now. I hope that class is going well for you!

Comment by jwrosenzweig October 18, 2009 @ 7:07 pm

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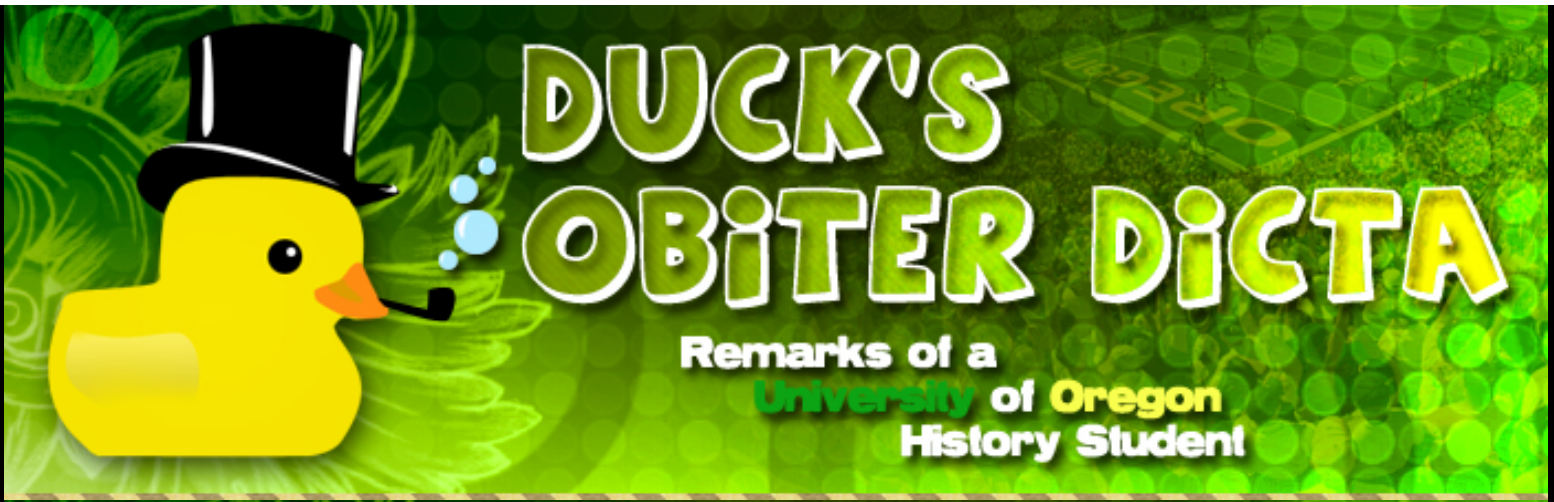
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The Daily Grind
 October 13, 2009, 12:03 pm
 Filed under: [Activities](#), [Observations](#) | Tags: [UO](#)

So it's not a very original name but this little cafe in the bottom of the Knight Library is a fascinating little place. I've been doing my one-on-ones here and after four hours here over the course of two days, I think I've stumbled upon an awesome little refuge. I didn't even know it was here until the library tour with the FAs before the term began, so it's a recent discovery for me. Thousands of people walk past it every day, myself included, and probably never notice it. Maybe that's why it feels the way it does – hidden.

Above us resides 2.4 million volumes full of knowledge, sheltering us like a roof of interlocking pages from the rest of hectic campus. An intellectual sanctuary? Perhaps. Some of the books have found their way down here – I see an art history book, a math textbook, a newspaper. I wonder how many lives are being lived on the page just within this tiny alcove of coffee and baked goods. A girl works on a topographic map. A tutor practices with his student. I see five computers, plus my own. I'm perusing ebay at the moment, looking for an alpaca poncho. I've found one, from Bolivia. Here I am, connect in a fleeting moment, with Bolivia, hundreds of miles away from my computer in the little Daily Grind. I wonder how many places the temporary residents of this hole in the wall travel whether by page, by screen or through conversation every day.

I'll come here in the future for sure. The girl who works the coffeestand makes that an easy decision too.

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Finding the right nooks/getaways/hiding places at a school is critical to the experience. I still have my favorite forgotten corners on a couple of campuses I remember with fondness (I'll have to hunt down a couple of the old UW spots, now that I'm back there). Your spot sounds excellent—I hope it remains a pleasant place to be, and that the girl at the coffeestand turns out to be a fan of political discussions, military history, and editorial cartooning.



Comment by jwrosenzweig October 14, 2009 @ 1:01 am

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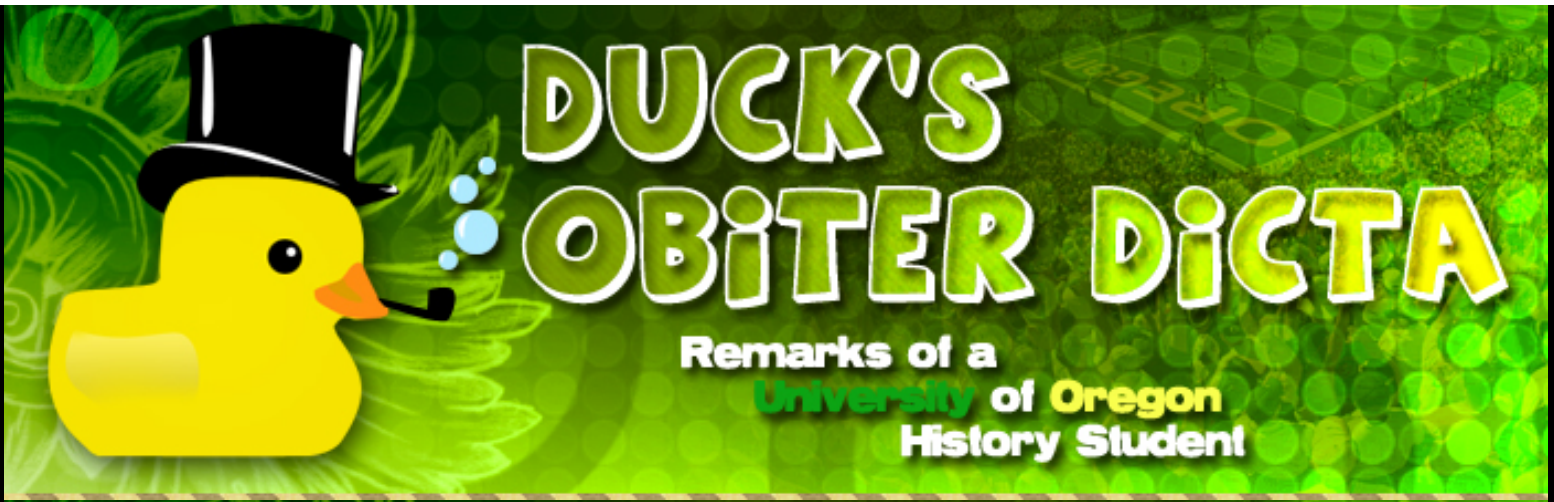
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Want to learn about someone? Watch a movie with 'em.

October 11, 2009, 11:29 pm

Filed under: [Observations](#) | Tags: [Obiter Dicta](#), [Residence Life](#)

To this day I maintain that going to theaters on a date/dinner date/outing etc is a counterproductive activity. I mean, really – when I want to hang out and spend some quality time with someone, I wouldn't normally suggest that we go chill in a dark room where we're oriented so as not to look at one another with dozens of other people and sit in silence for hours on end. Yet I, like everybody, go to the movies with my friends, at least at home, and don't think any differently about it. Now watching a movie at home, in a dorm room or in Earl 2 is a different story. Sometimes the room isn't entirely dark. There are beds, tables, seats, chairs and even a floor to lounge around. There is no protocol that frowns upon cell phone usage or verbal commentary. It's a different experience.

I know what you're thinking; duh, Matt, you're not exactly breaking any new ground here. Yeah, yeah, I know – yet I'm beginning to appreciate what a you can learn about someone from just watching a movie with them in you/their space.

Tonight I watched Master and Commander with Quincey. This can serve as an example. Now I don't really know Quincey all that well but I picked up on a few things. For instance, when we watched both Master and Commander and Goodfellas, she had an aversion to the graphic violence depicted in both, smiling humorously as she looked away when someone was having a limb amputated or was being stabbed in the trunk of a car, respectively. This of course suggests something about her sensibilities that's pretty different than say, a Hans Minea, who in the midst of any movie, will cackle for the lack of better term when someone is harmed, the more grotesque the damage the better. No reaction is better or worse, it's just telling. Quincey and I also kept up a little historical commentary throughout the movie, commenting on the details and time period. It takes two history majors.

Jordan Jensen fell asleep as soon as the tv turned on, the lights went down and his head hit the pillow whenever we watched anything at The V. It meant he was comfortable in his second home. Shiva sings when we watch Bollywood. She's a hopeless romantic (she'll deny that). Suzie told me in passing she often cries during a movie.

See, it's got me thinking – what do I do when I watch movies? Nothing. I do nothing. I sit and watch. I am subsequently endeared somehow to those who react to films. I smirked when Quincey said "Oh no!" to no one in particular when Russell Crowe spots a longboat of whalers, heralding the imminent cancellation of Paul Bettany's expedition to the Galapagos. I chuckle when I see Jensen asleep. I roll my eyes when Hans bursts out laughing at inappropriate times. I shake my head when Shiva sings. I would probably sport a good sized grin if Suzie ever cried. Maybe my emotional/mental wall is too high when it comes to my life and film. After all, that's the whole point of film as art – to illicit a reaction in the viewer. Theaters don't bring that out. It takes people.

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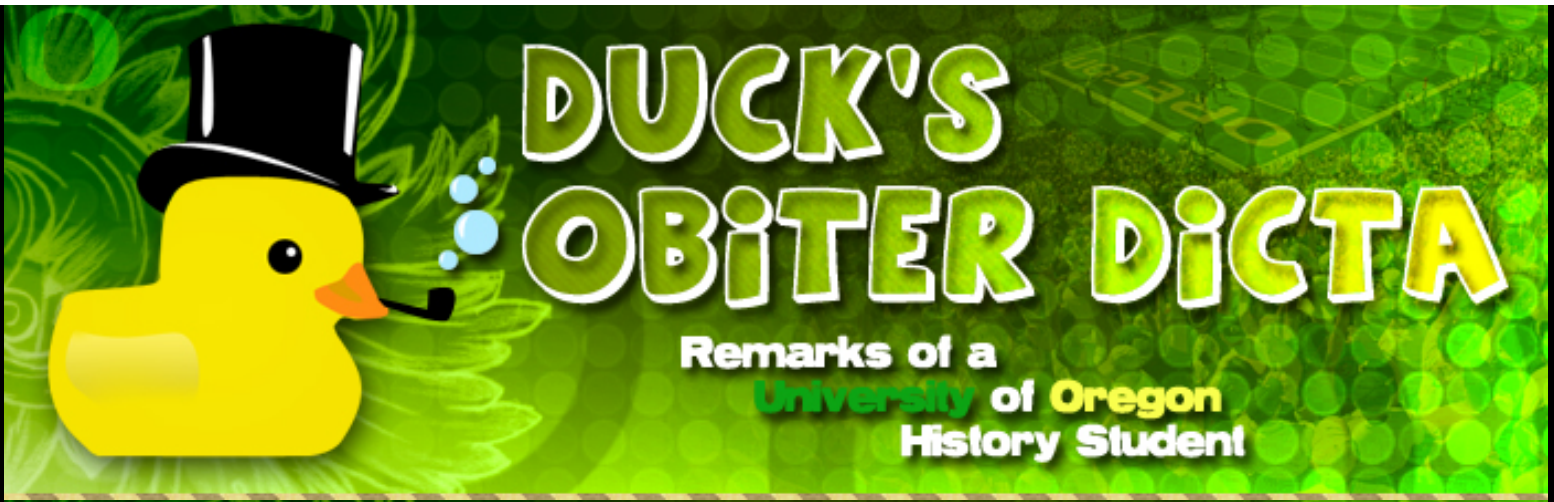
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A Joyous Day for No Reason
 October 8, 2009, 11:03 pm
 Filed under: [Observations](#) | Tags: [UO](#)

Mmmm. Contentment, perhaps? A muted exhaustion? Stoic-ness? A wave of existentialism? Happiness gleaned from entertaining long shot hopes? The last of sunlight of the year? Whatever it is, I'm in a good mood today. Happy even. Weird, I know, right? Really, I have no real reason to be pleased but hey, I'll take it.

This strange and short-lived mood didn't start off in an indicative way. On Sunday, my FIG students bailed on me when it came to the scavenger hunt, citing their hunger, lack of sleep and impending homework. I wasn't going to force them to do it, so, half amused and half mad, I had no choice but to meet Robyn's FIG, Big Issues, Small World and tell them that HH bailed. They gave me a lot of shit and but it was nothing I couldn't handle. Whatever it takes, I'll do anything for the FIG. If only they'll come talk to me and not look so pained.

I watched more Bollywood movies with Shiva. Ah, I have quickly learned that there is little in life that is more entertaining than a movie that breaks into song and dance every ten minutes or less, like clockwork, regardless of genre; and people still regard it as serious film. I guess she had one of those days and needed to watch one of the movies that can restore your hope in people and your dreams. I was in the same boat as she the day earlier after stumbling my way through a social interchange that was way beyond my normal modus operandi and resulted with my foot squarely wedged in my mouth...and the remedy? Gladiator. Still, my botched interlude was not a complete calamity and resulted in a opportunity to get some things off my chest that I had been harboring since the beginning of the term. Needless to say, that put me in a better mood.



Read all about it. Score!

when it occurred to me that the headline indicated that the health center was scheduled to run out of their strategic reserve *today*. Perhaps then they had some left. So in I went in and twenty minutes and 15 dollars later, I came out with inert flu virus embedded within my person, prompting the sporting of a goofy smile as I walked past the long line of people winding toward the health center in search of the same.

I felt good. The sun was out. The music upbeat. The food smells of exotic eateries from the street fair wafted up to Fenton Hall where people sprawled on the grass. I couldn't help but smile. This is the stuff that keeps me going, an image that appears only from time to time, like a single frame of unabated cheeriness in a long film of otherwise adequate but ultimately uninspiring footage of broken light and flickering shadow, a splash of color on a greyscaled sea.

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I'm not describing the symptoms of depression, am I? Well whatever, I'll take it even if it is - it makes the moments of pleasure exponentially better.

4 Comments

4 Comments so far

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Flu vaccine? Pah! Some of us take our pandemics straight-up, with a slice of lemon. You young whipper-snappers, with your "flu shots" and your "immune systems". When I was young, we didn't HAVE white blood cells, oh no. No, we had nothing but red blood cells, and we LIKED it. A disease would come along, and we'd fight through it with nothing but true grit and elbow grease, and if the disease consumed somebody, then fair play to the disease!



In case you can't tell, your refusal to reply to my earlier comment has inspired my strange and sarcastic sense of humor. :-) Hope U of O continues to be fun. And if any of your FIG folk are reading this, go talk to Matt! He's cool! And he knows more about World War I naval armaments than any human being should....just ask him.

Comment by jwrosenzweig October 9, 2009 @ 11:32 pm

[Reply](#)

Ha, you liked having no white blood cells, huh? So basically your generation lived with an immune system that was essentially HIV positive and you happily delth with it? And in the meantime if you went to public school, I'm guessing that you would have had to walk three miles barefoot in the snow, if you so chose to join you're Helper T cell deficient peers in the realm of public school?



I apologize for missing your earlier comment. UO continues to be fun – you will hear from me when it ceases to be so. And thanks for the good word towards my FIG students, though I will admit my World War One naval knowledge is somewhat limited...

Comment by mvilleneuve October 10, 2009 @ 12:21 am

[Reply](#)

Clearly my hyperbole was taken too literally. We had white blood cells. And candy bars were a NICKEL!



Comment by jwrosenzweig October 10, 2009 @ 6:17 pm

[Reply](#)

Impossible!



Comment by mvilleneuve October 11, 2009 @ 10:26 pm

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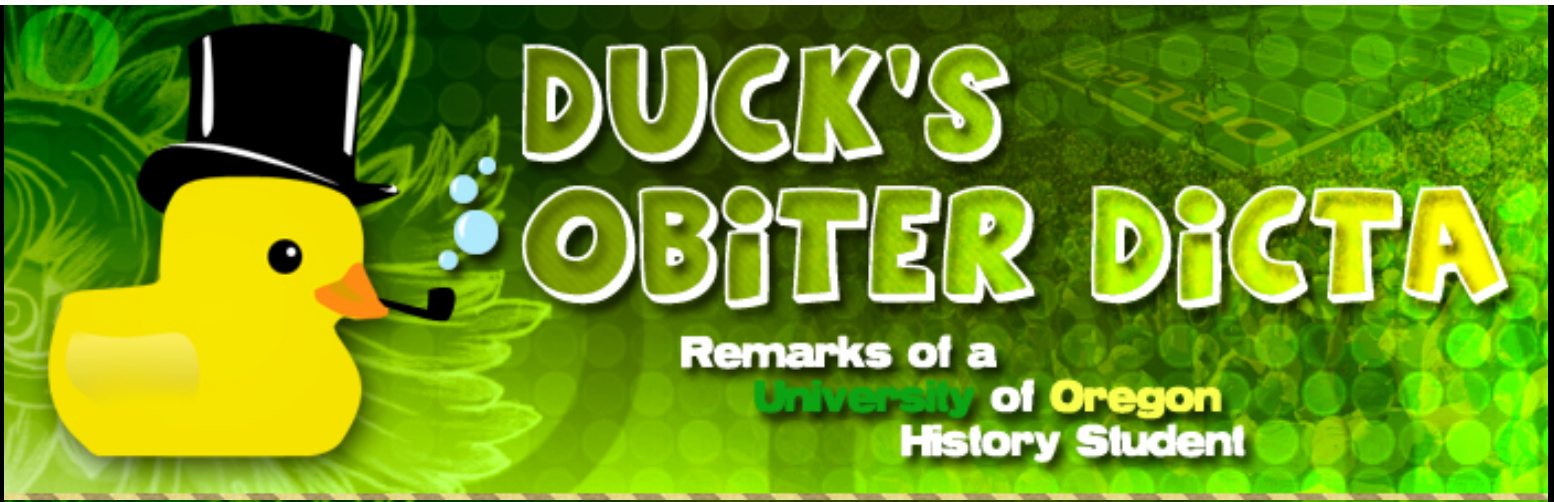
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A FIG Update

October 2, 2009, 10:06 pm

Filed under: [Activities](#) | Tags: [FIGs](#), [Residence Life](#)

The following is a weekly status report for Hidden History that I thought I might post as it chronicles my week pretty well.

Salutations!

Wow, what a week. To be honest, these last seven days have felt more like a month than a week. I suppose the time distortion should be expected for those who have experienced the strange convergence of social, professional and emotion concerns that is the Res FA position. Well, I'm a little new to this and let me tell you I was kinda swept off my feet. Nevertheless, here's the lowdown in Hidden History...

Beginning with move in day, I was mobilized to keep my FIG students aware of my presence in the hall. I checked in with every resident and gave my FIG students a little special attention. At night during the first few days, my co Shiva and I would play movies in the Earl classrooms for anyone that was interested. Keeping people entertained seems to be a big part of the job! We also did a trip to Saturday market where I got several FIG students to come with.

Our first meeting as a group was rather impromptu; when our hall became the first to evacuate during the campus-wide electrical surge that resulted in an hour and half wait on the EMU lawn, it became obvious that something had to be done to keep the group from ducking back into the hall or to become restless to the point of riot. So our first pleasantries came in the form of an off the cuff icebreaker involving both Morton and McClure students. It was a great opportunity to meet the Bella Italia FIG as well. Rather stressful to suppress mutinous students for an hour and half but we made do.

Our first proper FIG encounter as a group was on the 25th at the first FIG meeting. I only missed two students – the rest made their way to Columbia 150 on time and we went to LLCN 123 where we met with Kevin. We did introductions, an icebreaker and had a fantastic discussion concerning our summer assignment. I would guesstimate that 75% of the student took a look at the diary of Lucile over the summer so I was very satisfied. After the meeting, Kevin said it was one of the best FIG meetings he had ever done. I definitely owe him a lot for his creative energy and guiding advice.

Convocation rolled around. Grumbings about duration and football tickets abounded but I got about 80% of my students to go. I even got them to stick around briefly for the picnic and they got a chance to talk more with Kevin. And then, like a bullet from a gun, they were gone, off to secure football tickets from a distribution system that wouldn't activate for another hour. Oh well.

On Sunday, I took about 60% of the FIG on an OBT tour of campus with two campus planners. I thought it was a really good experience, as the two gentlemen knew much more about campus than any ambassador. The only thing was that the tour dragged on a little too long and our collective attention spanned waned but I don't regret our attendance; it should serve as an excellent foundation for the Documenting Freshman Year project.

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Wednesday the 30th I had a FIG meeting in the lobby where 80% of the students showed up. It was purely social in purpose (no one has yet to really come talk to me in my room where my door is open most the time so I was trying assuage any potential fears. Maybe it's the beard, I don't know.) We played an icebreaker that, to my utter shock, the students actually enjoyed to the extent that they didn't want to stop. Highlight of my week right there. It was good bonding.

This weekend, I will do my library tour and then meet up with Robyn and I are challenging each other's FIGs to a photo-replication scavenger hunt which both FIGs have accepted readily. Hidden History will probably win.

Cheers,

Matt

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1 Comment so far

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How did the library tour and scavenger hunt go?



Comment by jwrosenzweig October 8, 2009 @ 3:48 pm

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DUCK'S OBITER DICTA

Remarks of a
University of Oregon
History Student

Classes Begin

September 30, 2009, 2:22 pm

Filed under: [Activities](#) | Tags: [Classes](#), [UO](#)

So once again I find myself a student here at the UO. It's nice, really – having a schedule that has your consent, or at least some semblance of consent. Having structured time for learning, not just for the sake of structured time (say, for training as an example) is fantastic. Get up, go to class, learn, lunch, nap, read, dinner, running, Jon and Conan, sleep. Wonderful.

This term:

Philosophy 101 - Intro to Philosophy. Almost too easy. Professor Johnson is animated and experienced, bright and engaging. I am looking forward to learning the basics to supplement last year's leap into ethics. Should be a good course.

Projected grade: A to A- Projected Satisfaction: Uh, awesome? I.e. does morality come from God? I should think not, Tolstoy, ya jerk.

Folklore 250 – Intro to Folklore. Too easy. This class should be interesting as the field of folklore is largely unknown to me but one does get tired of being spoonfed requirements and expectations. Professor Fagan is obviously an SME and time will hopefully unveil her expertise.

Projected grade: A+ to A- Projected satisfaction: Meh.

History 301 – Modern Europe. Fantastic. Would I ever badmouth a history course? Doubt it. Still, Professor Wanke is really out there. Not as in weird or strange, but very straightforward or in your face. Brutally honest, brutally opinionated. Love it. Out of field? Who cares – his personality and good humor makes up for it.

Projected grade: A- to B+ Projected Satisfaction: "The Treaties of Utrecht and Rastatt (1713-1714) confirmed William III's policy that no single power should be strong enough to exercise hegemony over the continent and the international recognition of the balance of power made peace more durable than had been the case back in 1648." -Birch, 141. Need I say more?

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I project my level of interest in conversing with you about these classes as very high. Tolstoy and I will give it a good run (well, maybe I won't stand quite so close to Tolstoy, but I'm sure I can find a decent ally somewhere among your course material). :-) And folklore and early modern history....be still, my beating heart! I've read an extensive essay on Emerson, by the way, which has raised some interesting (and fairly harsh) criticisms of Emerson's philosophy. We should chat about them, at some point.



Comment by jwrosenzweig September 30, 2009 @ 3:00 pm

[Reply](#)

That would be fantastic, both on the Tolstoy and Emerson front. I think the hardest part of defining one's identity from the great minids of history is striving to not be confined to being a purist i.e.to adhere to a thinker's philosophy to the letter. But at the same time, avoiding gross cherry-picking is important too. It's tough, thinking for one's self...



Comment by mvilleneuve September 30, 2009 @ 5:35 pm

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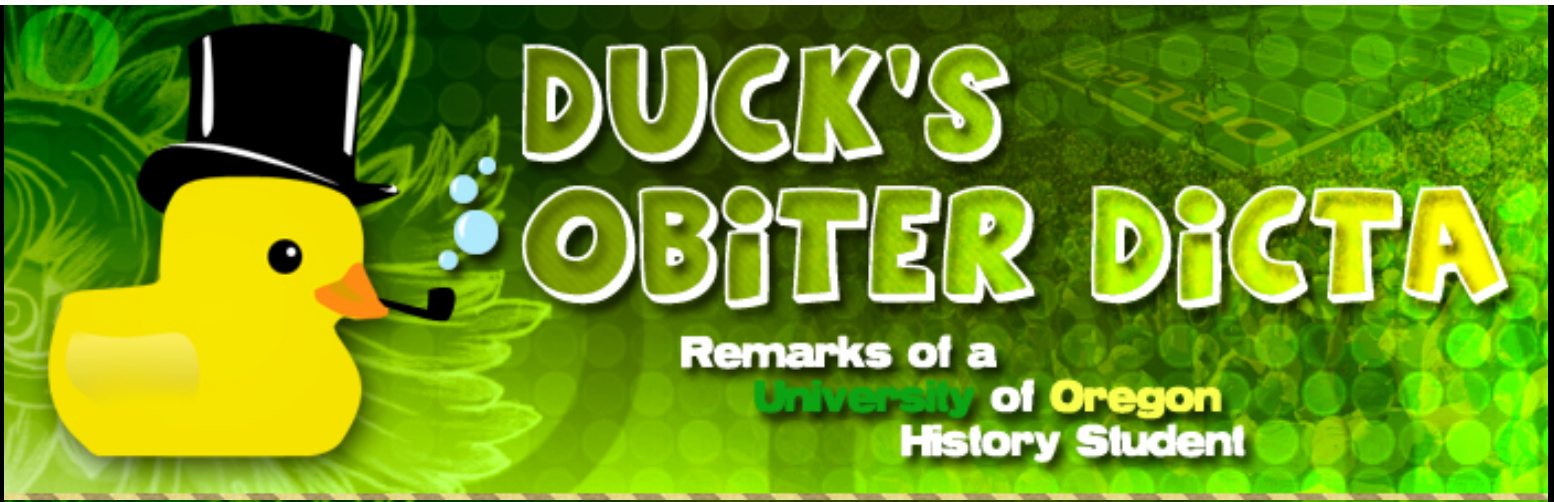
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Days Before Class

September 26, 2009, 8:07 pm

Filed under: [Activities](#) | Tags: [FIGs](#), [Residence Life](#), [UO](#)

I got some sleep last night, thankfully. It is the first step on my long return to sanity.



Spiderman above the art gallery door.

Life with residents in McClure has been different from not only life before the 24-25th, but also from last year in Sheldon. I listen at night with greater specificity, hoping that the next door in the hall closing won't be followed with pounding on my door with cries for help. Everything takes on little footnotes; taking a shower prompts the question, "is the shower door left open?" A trip to the bathroom becomes, "Is there nothing but toiletries in the bathroom garbage?" A walk down the hall becomes, "Is that music too loud? Hell, is *my* music too loud?" A jaunt outside: "Are they smoking 25 feet away from the building?"

Names. Oh names. I'm trying so hard to memorize names and I'm failing miserably. I need pictures to go with the names but I don't want to do a freshman photoshoot for fear of being laughed out of the hall.

Our first FIG meeting was fantastic. Most people read the article I had assigned over the summer, meaning they also set up their wiki accounts. Still, there were several who had not yet done so. But I really don't understand – I told them in class that they should stop by my room to talk, to ask for help, to set up accounts...but only one girl has stopped by, Kelsey, and albiet for 30 seconds, just to find out where ResNet was. I don't get it – why are people afraid of coming to the 3rd floor? My room is colorful, my music is cheery; is my beard scaring people away? My hair? It's beyond me. I can only keep my door open and hope.

I went to the saturday morning market today and came back in time to watch game against Cal. I sat in my room, shouting and clapping to an empty hall when we made plays. You could tell who was at Autzen from the bright red sunburns people were sporting on their arms and faces, but you could tell it was worth it.

I'm really on the fence about this year – I'm not casting judgement yet because I have very little to go off of but there are small things bothering me everywhere I seem to go. The hall, the staff, the friends. I don't know - keep your fingers crossed.



Market in Eugene. Even bought a shirt.

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Stay positive, man, it's early yet. "Teachers" and "students" (I know you have a somewhat different relationship than that, but I think it's pretty applicable) take a while to find their comfort zones re: one another. I thought you hated me for about a solid month, lo, those many years ago. Give it time.



And never doubt the beard, man. The beard is life.

Comment by jwrosenzweig September 26, 2009 @ 11:59 pm

[Reply](#)

I chuckle at the fact that my blog has turned into a rant, complaint-laden forum for me and a great place for you to utilize your counseling skills. But all jests aside, I do really appreciate the comments.



And yes, the beard is life. I know, the thought of shaving crossed my mind for all of about .00001 seconds and even in that time I think I threw up a little bit in my mouth.

Comment by mvilleneuve September 27, 2009 @ 1:44 am

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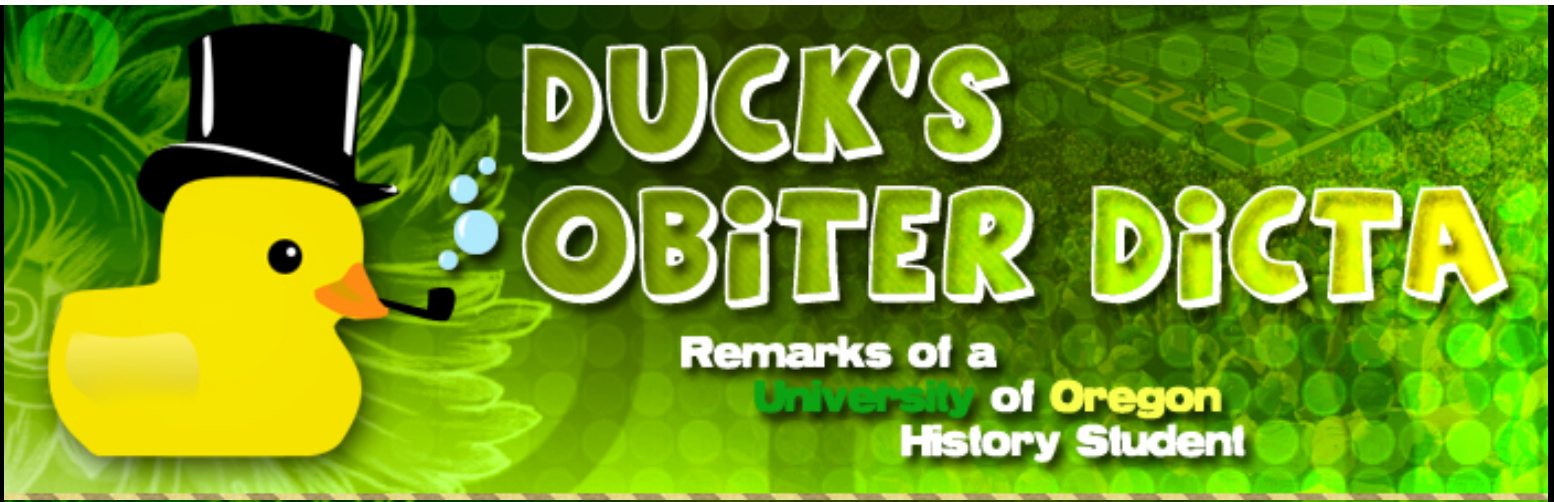
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Move In, Move Out

September 25, 2009, 12:48 am

Filed under: [Activities](#) | Tags: [Residence Life](#), [UO](#)

Today was move-in day a.k.a. organized chaos. Staffers honored reveille at 7:00 and started shifts around 9:00. I worked with Karim, checking in residents from McClure and Morton. It was simple enough work, but I get burned out being so outgoing, proactive and energetic. It takes a large toll on my person to exert such monumental extra social presence so the day really took it out of me. I never really got much alone time.

I had lunch with Iris and Shiva; we discussed whether or not I thought there was "a one" for me; i.e. the ideal counterpart. I don't think so - I don't think the world is big enough for two Matt Villeneuves, especially if one was a young woman. Her moods would be generally wavelike, her disposition fickle and her emotions a towering force of unreasonableness. So I doubt such a person exists. But from a less fateful perspective and more from a pragmatic one, I explained to my colleagues that I thought I wasn't capable of effectively elevating a friendship to a meaningful relationship with any woman, the "one" or not. Indeed, I have met with failure combined with lack of opportunity since high school (but even then, success was limited). With the social self-exile of college life, I am suggesting that even if I could find this hypothetical "one," I'd probably botch the job. My lingering inability to develop meaningful relationships would sink the relationship before it even set sail, thus contradicting the "one" theory from the beginning.

I digress. After my shifts, I caught up with the rest of staff to prepare for the So Now What? presentation. I took a quick jaunt to Hiron to get a beach ball for my FIG (I was unsuccessful) and Desiree told me to take a coupon for a free laser pointer that Jude had wanted. It was like a \$2.99 POS that I endured much awkwardness to procure. Nevertheless, I did it. I went back to McClure and was going to rest but as I was walking through the halls, the lights went out. I looked in the stairwell - the emergency lights were on and the hall was dark. I quickly realized the whole hall was dark. The CD wasn't on duty and both Desiree and Suzie didn't return my calls - they were in the Carson So Now What? meeting and couldn't be reached. Shiva and I tried to call our CW to no avail. Students prowled the halls, looking for information, which beyond the obvious, I did not possess. I figured we'd just wait until the lights came back on. Then the fire alarm went off.

Things went downhill pretty fast from there. Previously tired from a day of check-ins, I didn't really have much energy; I knew thankfully where we were supposed to evacuate and so I yelled at some people to go to the EMU lawn. People always think drills are beneath them - hell, I did too. But what people didn't realize was that this wasn't a drill and I had no control over the situation. Again with the control motif. So people grumbled and took their sweet time to get the EMU lawn. There was a lot of "There's obviously no fire, let's go back" or "This is stupid, the firefighters don't even seem to be trying." It's the kind of thing I would have said just months ago too, perturbed about being forced out of my room onto the lawn for what seems a drill. But as an FA, it had a totally different effect than caustic humor - it became a merciless barrage of critical commentary that needed to be control and contained so as to disaffect the whole group into ignoring what staff members like Shiva and eventually Tesia and Hillary were directing them to do.

So initiative was needed. And I was spent from the day of being open and friendly. So I didn't really have the heart. But I had no choice. Feeling foolish, if not sheepish, I welcomed the group to the University and then grasped at straws; we played an icebreaker on the lawn, the

mismatched group from Morton and McClure, with no other RAs in sight. It sucked. Here I was trying to make the best of a situation where there was no power, a raging alarm and discontented students. And no help.

It's really not that big of a deal. I'm comfortable leading groups. But I needed all the cards. As darkness fell and we ended up outside for around an hour, people were really pissed and I had no idea what to tell them; I was, afterall, in the same boat as they. I was really irritated that none of the phone numbers I called yielded any results, others RAs were slow in coming (though they saved us eventually) and I was never told anything. Anything. I wonder if anyone in charge of me even knew what was happening. Then Jude fell into my charge and he sat on my lap for ten minutes, looking at my pictures on my phone and talking about the laser pointer I had got for him as all of the new residents from other complexes walked past, looking at the five year old settled in my lap. I've never been good at talking to little kids - the cumulative shrinking of my comfort zone was reaching damages stages.

It's true we aren't the Red Cross or first responders. But I was put in an unenviable situation with no ideas, no information and no energy. I was a rough way to start. We eventually got back into the building after the meetings. I had to rip down incorrect posters, talk to my FIG students and show my face at an event. But first I got Jude his laser pointer, which he had been begging for all night. I wasn't going to let him down – keeping my promise to a five year old was the most satisfying thing I did today and his smile at discovering the small pleasure of a red dot was reward enough for a tough day.

2 Comments

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I have to say, in addition to the sympathy I extend for what sounds like a truly hard day, I'm really impressed at how your new role stretches you, and that you're allowing yourself to be stretched by it. College often just mummifies the high school personality, leaving it to sit more or less undisturbed while years roll by above it. But you seem to be willing to at least put yourself in new situations, accept new responsibilities, and try to connect with people in new ways. And that's really a genuinely cool thing.



Which is why I think the "Matt will never have a meaningful relationship with a woman" conversation is needlessly bleak. :-) After all, the Matt I knew would no more have spent hours conducting icebreakers to keep up morale during a false fire alarm while entertaining a five year old with a laser pointer than he would have flown to the moon on paper wings as a fund-raiser for the Republican Party. In short, people don't always change, but you seem capable of it—I look forward to our next tale of how Matt (who remains, it must be said, Matt at his core) adapts further to this new environment. :-)

Comment by jwrosenzweig September 25, 2009 @ 8:36 am

[Reply](#)

I think you bring up an interesting point; for all the hype and reputation of college as a comfort-zone-expander and inhibition-eraser, I really do think that it also works quite the opposite way as well, solidifying many a personality in their ways previous to the experience.



"... he would have flown to the moon on paper wings as a fund-raiser for the Republican Party."

That's one for the books.

Comment by mvilleneuve September 26, 2009 @ 7:41 pm

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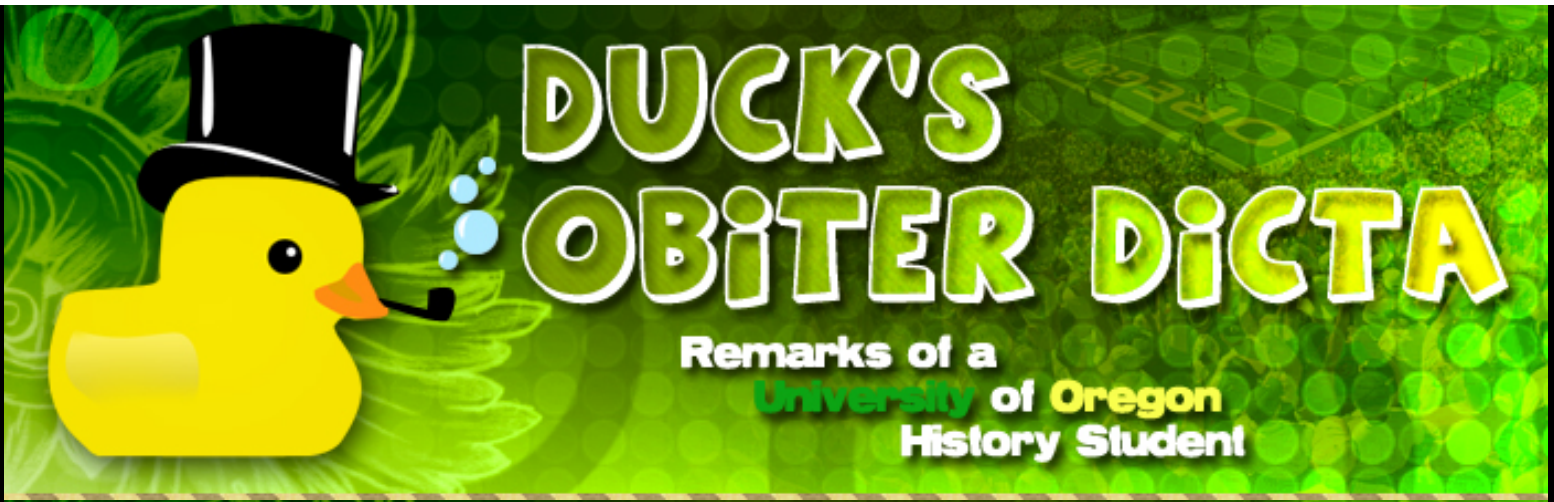
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A Precious Day Off
September 20, 2009, 10:55 pm
Filed under: [Activities](#) | Tags: [Emerson](#), [UO](#)



A bridge too far (without a bike
at least)

Sunday was a day we had entirely off from training.
Thank god.

I slept in until noon. I ate breakfast. I read a chapter about the war of Spanish succession. I sat on the bridge and read some Emerson. I went to the Pro and drew a sketch of the USS *Oregon*. I ate dinner. I watched five minutes of Bend it Like Beckham. I played an hour of ping pong. I set up my University phone (Shout out to Suzu, for that and other things. I'm ecstatic to have found someone who is approachable to me that is in a similar situation concerning their

childhood religion. Now I only have to make sure I don't scare her off.) Hell, I even wrote a blog post. Who says you can't be productive on a lazy Sunday?

I only have three residents so far and no one has yet to step on my floor. I introduced myself to each one and I keep my door open, waiting, hoping that one day, someone will walk by and say hello that isn't on rounds.

Emerson had some interesting things to say today. His maxims on scholarship were much more poignant than his comments on the method of nature. Reading Emerson by the river is like getting in touch with an old friend. It's good to be back in touch.

"What is history but the work of ideas, a record of the incomputable energy which his infinite aspirations infuse into man? Has anything grand and lasting been done? Who did it? Plainly not any man but all men: it was the prevalence and inundation of an idea. What brought the pilgrims here? One man says civil liberty: another, the desire of founding a church: and a third discovers that the motive force was plantation and trade. But if the Puritans could rise from the dust, they could not answer. It is to be seen in what they were, and not what they designed: it was the growth and expansion of the human race and resembled herein the sequent Revolution, which was not begun in Lexington or Concord or Virginia but was the overflowing of the sense of natural right in every clear and active spirit of the period."

Excellent.

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Emerson...man, that's some good stuff. Sometimes a little dense, but because there's a heartiness to the thoughts. Do Emerson's notions about faith and the divine intersect with this relationship to childhood religion, or are those separate trains of thought?



And hey, why the War of the Spanish Succession (King George's War? Am I right?)? Are you going in for colonial history this quarter, and I'd forgotten?

Comment by jwrosenzweig September 22, 2009 @ 12:00 am
[Reply](#)

Completely – Emerson speaks to me about faith in, shall we say, “divinity,” like nothing I have ever seen, read or heard before. He's been my guide in my present retreat from the church and let me tell you it's nice to have someone who shares your thoughts on such matters, even if he lived in the 19th century. Forging one's own beliefs is a harrowing business.



Ah, but we in America knew it as King William's War if my memory from yesterday serves me correctly (my money says it does not, however).I enrolled in History 301: History of Modern Europe. From the Treaty of Westphalia to the fall of Napoleon. I might drop it however due to my course load but we'll see.

Comment by mvilleneuve September 23, 2009 @ 10:36 am
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DUCK'S OBITER DICTA

Remarks of a
University of Oregon
History Student

Oregon Wins, Matt Loses
September 13, 2009, 12:22 pm
Filed under: [Activities](#) | Tags: [UO](#)

Wow. All this training is exhausting. Sessions all day. Yet despite the aggressive schedule, yesterday was the most beneficial day so far as training goes.

The entire housing staff uprooted from campus for a night to go to Camp Riley, which was sort of like a prison camp in one of the off campus dorms; I say prison camp not only out of levity but also because we couldn't leave until the program was over. I had to sleep on a thin mattress in my winter mummy bag in a room that felt like it was at least 110 degrees. Still, when we woke up, we worked on an activity called Behind Closed Doors. Jordan does this too at UW. Basically the new staff are placed in a roleplay situation and then forced to confront situations, well, behind closed doors. The returning staff play as actors - emotional students, drunk students, belligerent students; you name it. I did two, one where I told a resident that he was playing his music too loudly and council a dispute over two roommates concerning a confederate flag flying in the room. My performance was passable - you can only do so much in a roleplay situation.



With tihs on my door,
my room is complete.

Thanks Jensen.
my bike was gone.

Before we left, we had Officer Meyer from DPS burn some marijuana so those of us not versed in the trade of detection could know what tosmell for. I was the only one on our staff that went to smell what this was all about. I was pretty sure I had smelled it before (I had, as it turned out) but I figured watching marijuana burn was more entertaining than a staff meeting. Smells awful by the way. As Officer Meyer put, "Nothing smells like marijuana other than marijuana."

Dad came down to Eugene today for the game against Purdue. He brought with him the rest of my stuff for my room - my TV sound system, my ottomans (why is name of furniture shared with the Ottoman Empire?) and a certain poster which Jordan Jensen gave me for my door - Mom was not a fan of Jensen's gift but good thing I don't live to make her happy, right? I took the EMX back from Camp Riley to meet my Dad at Autzen but when I got back to campus, I discovered that I was going to have a difficult time riding to Autzen to meet my Dad as

The one night I was away from campus unable to keep an eye on my bike, it was stolen.

I loved that bike. I got it as a gift from my parents. It took me all over Sammamish and introduced me to Eugene. It had an awesome suspension, effective gears, a comfortable seat. I just put new pedals on it last year. And now it's gone. I don't think I even have a picture of it.

Feeling horribly violated, I walked over to Autzen, adding injury to my anger as I would have otherwise biked. There I found my Dad and my aunt. I told my Dad about the awful fate that befell my bike and he told me I should have been more mindful of its security due to the fact no one is one campus yet. Not exactly a natural grief counselor. Still, he told me he and mom would help me buy another one. I have good parents at the end of the day.

So my Dad and I went to the football game. It was my first Oregon game. Dad still remembers his. Oregon offense was inept the first the half and we commiserated together. Then we pulled some good plays and we yelled together. After the first quarter, a guy came and nearly pushed me out of my bleacher seat – he smelled distinctly like Officer Meyer from earlier in the day. The irony. The highlight of the game was a touchdown run by Barner on 3rd and 23 or something of the nature; Dad got a kick out of that.



There was a sizeable thunderstorm during the game, with lightning for miles.

On the return from campus we talked about the tribal and animalistic nature of sports. He helped me empty the car and then went his separate way.

A full day, which, for both the good and the bad, I will remember for many years to come.

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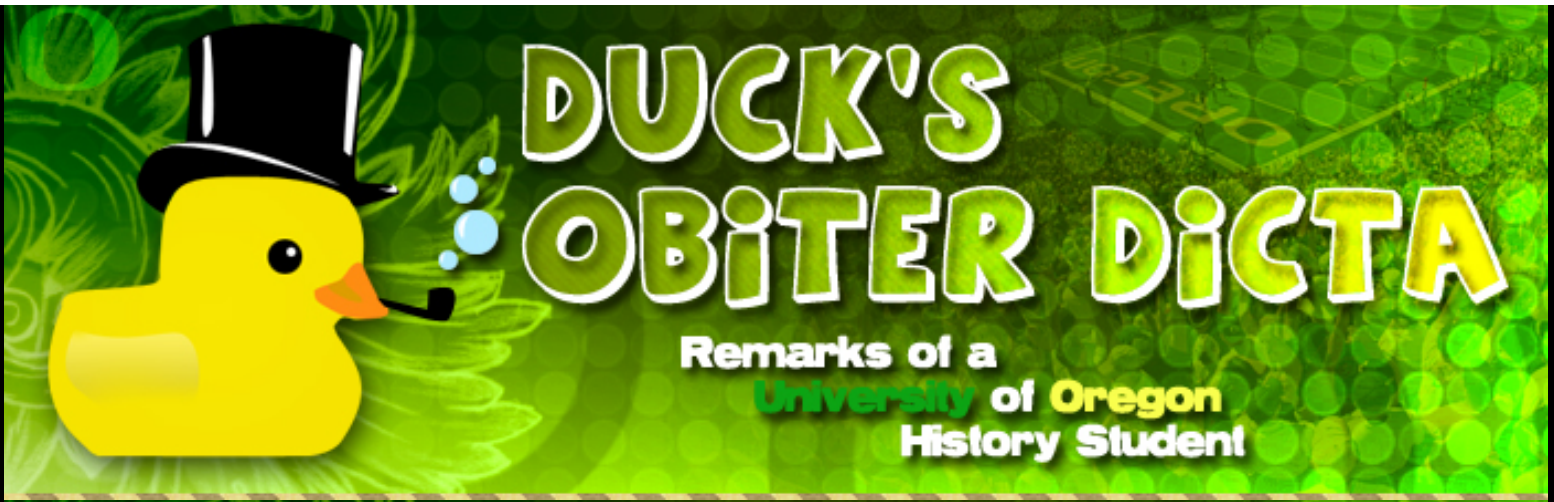
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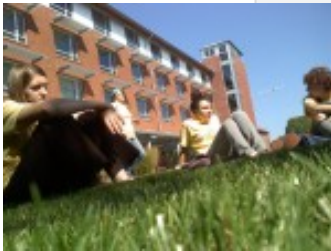
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Firsters

September 10, 2009, 11:52 pm

Filed under: [Activities](#) | Tags: [FIGs](#), [UO](#)

Carson/Earl FAs on the lawn.

So housing training began today. The schedule is daunting – we work all day, in sessions, in seminars, in discussions...even dreaded icebreakers. (I still hold to the idea that Jordan Jensen and I pioneered in which a new group of people would get to know another by being issued goggles and a pick axe and then instructed to break a huge block of ice into a puddle of water. It'd be the ideal way to meet people, truly. How often do you break apart ice? Often? I didn't think so.) I wouldn't have been such a long day if I had been able to sleep...which I was not. The mattress didn't support

my back at all and I seemed to be laying on an abrupt decline that was not conducive to the horizontal condition. So I finally fell asleep at five am, only to be awoken at 8:30 am by a residence hall cleaning crew. Sigh...Oh well. I took advantage of their work to swap my less-than-satisfactory mattress out with one down the hall so one of my residents will have to deal with that excuse for bedding later in the year.

It's too early to tell the value of this training so I will withhold my commiserating until later. I played ping pong with Ryan yesterday, lost, played with Dan today, lost. At least I'm consistent, eh?

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I'd argue that a group of strangers demolishing a block of ice with a pickaxe is an ideal way to unintentionally sever the fingers of one's prospective friends. Although there's probably something to be said for the camaraderie formed in the awkward silences you'll experience standing next to their bed in the emergency room, holding their pinky in a cup of ice.



Comment by jwrosenzweig September 11, 2009 @ 8:30 pm

[Reply](#)

You have no imagination. Think about it – this literal icebreaker would also be a way for students to step out of their comfort zones. And if people are really so inept as to lose fingers, then this activity serves as a method for social Darwinism; we probably didn't want them in our group anyway.



Comment by mvilleneuve September 13, 2009 @ 11:37 am

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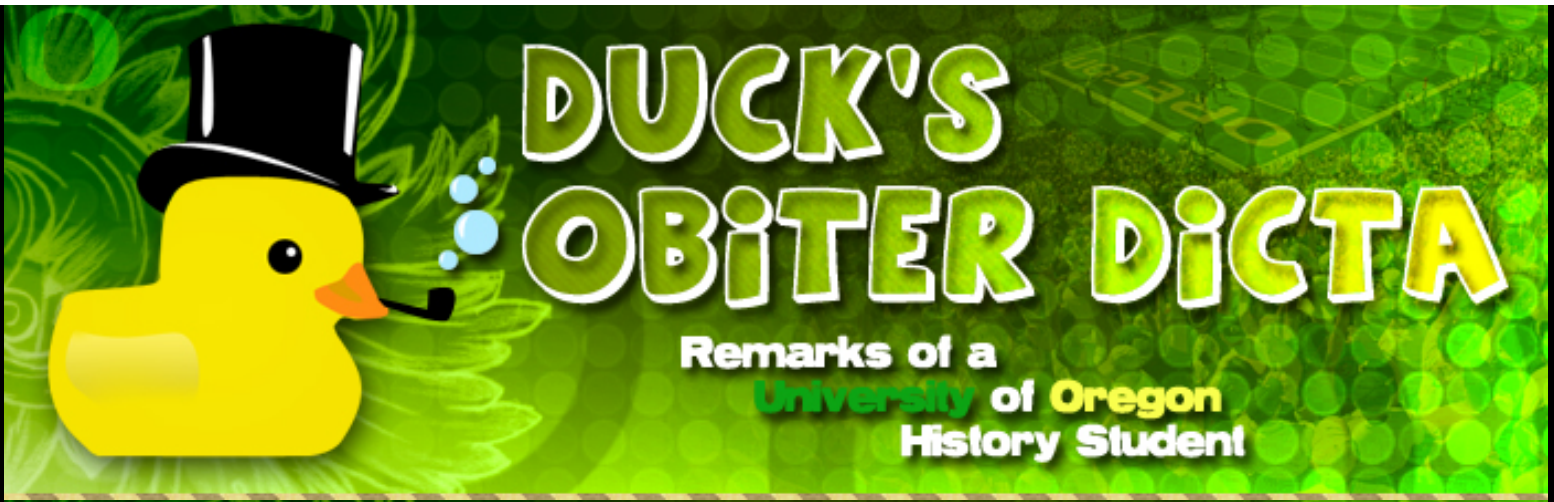
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Tidal Requiem
September 4, 2009, 11:14 pm
Filed under: [Arts](#) | Tags: [Cannon Beach](#)



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Why did you choose "On The Sea" by John Keats to appear in the background of the photo?

Comment by jwrosenzweig September 5, 2009 @ 10:18 pm

[Reply](#)

I suppose a simple answer like "Well gee Mr. R, its a picture of the ocean and the poem is about the sea, please connect the dots," doesn't work because I'm guessing you're about to enlighten me about the fact that Keats poem has nothing to do with the sea or something like that, right?

Comment by mvilleneuve September 6, 2009 @ 12:31 am

[Reply](#)

Heh...okay, your comment is fair. I just thought it was unusual given that there are thousands of poems about the sea, and Keats isn't exactly the most famous of poets (although well-known, I'll admit), and this isn't exactly the most famous of his poems. Basically I'm wondering if you've been a closet Keats fan all this time, or if you picked up an anthology at the beach house, or if you googled "poems about the sea" and liked this one. Any of which are acceptable, I should note. :-)

Comment by jwrosenzweig September 6, 2009 @ 3:23 pm

[Reply](#)

I jest, of course. No, I am most certainly not a Keats fan (I find him somewhat laborious) but there's an old leatherbound guided book in the master bedroom of our beach house that is of Keats work so his name popped into my head when I went to Google to search for poetry – sure enough, he had a sonnet about the ocean and it struck my fancy.

Comment by mvilleneuve September 6, 2009 @ 9:27 pm

[Reply](#)

I did think that "O wild west wind, thou breath of Autumn's being!" seemed a bit over-wrought for you, Neustadt. :-) That particular sonnet seems a better fit, though, and it certainly suits the photo.

Comment by jwrosenzweig September 6, 2009 @ 10:18 pm

[Reply](#)

Ah, you know me too well.

Comment by mvilleneuve September 6, 2009 @ 11:13 pm

[Reply](#)

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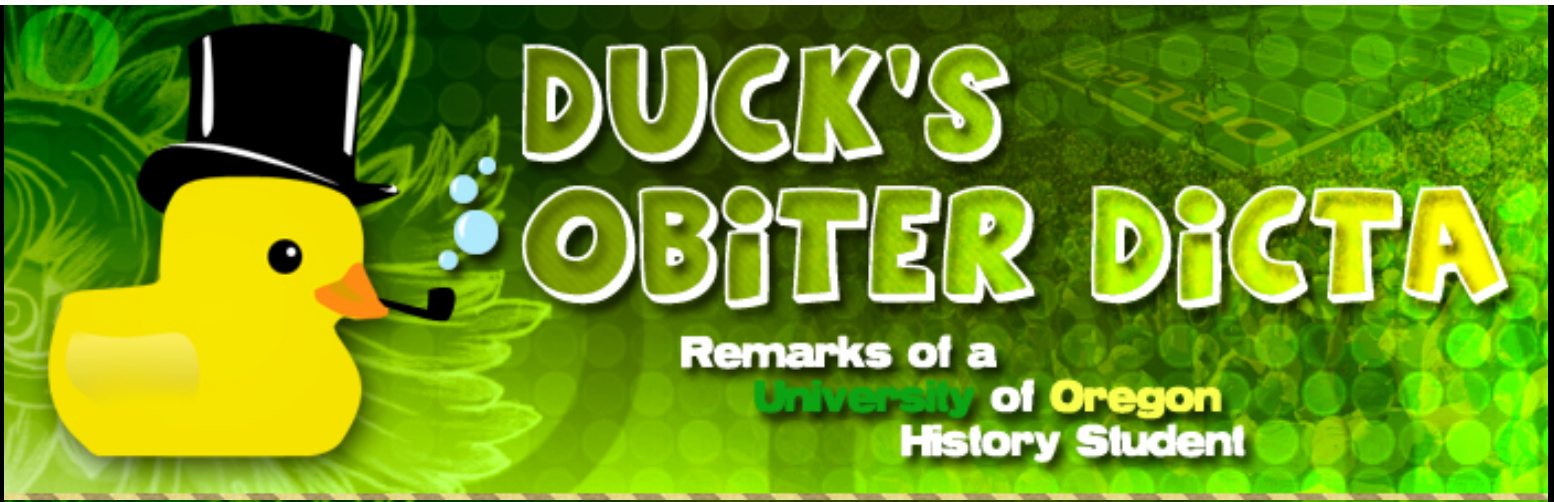
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Beached

September 4, 2009, 2:43 pm

Filed under: [Activities](#), [Observations](#) | Tags: [Cannon Beach](#)

The nightly scene from
VillaView

Looking out the windows of my house at Cannon Beach is akin to looking out the windows of the space station; the view makes one realize that the Earth and all the life it contains is short lived; all human history is insignificant amid the ocean of stars; and that our time here is nothing before that of Nature .

Before I head back to campus on the 8th to report for training, I'm spending a week and half at VillaView. It's nice, of course, to be doing nothing and having nothing required of me. I've been sitting in the brown leather chairs and watching the ocean waves, water-bourne

energy that I like to think have traveled all the way from some far off reach of the Pacific try and beat the rocks of the Oregon coast into a pulp, a seemingly never ending battle that yields entertainment for both my lazy observing self and the five year old kids who splash in the waves themselves. It's not warm enough for an educated young adult such as myself to join in the war and take on the breakers with his body as a battering ram so I've been reading and lounging instead. Let the little kids hold down my post until I can get reinforcements to join in the battle.

Really – I'm almost bored. Well, boredom isn't really the right idea. I love Cannon Beach dearly but I've practically grown up here...so therefore spending time here is, well, kinda routine. I hope I don't come across as conceited or spoiled – rather, Cannon Beach is a place I love and I want to much to share it with others. Shame things like work and education are obstacles to such youthful aspirations.

I went with Papa two days ago to the Church of Our Lady Victory (so Catholic) to help serve food to the homeless. There were sixty or so, mostly old men and women who were suffering from afflictions of the body, the mind and the wallet. Coming from VillaView to a shoddy church full of worn, tired and sick really makes one appreciate A) why we need universal health care in this country and B) how lucky I am to be able to come home to leather chairs, a beautiful sunset and my own thoughts.

I got a call today from CJ at Gonzaga. He told me all about how his new room has 5.1 surround sound and that his roommate made sure to leave a space in their room for his golf clubs. He laughed; in class he learned about Aethelred the Unready, which I'm sure will become an inside joke. He was a Viking, look it up. He told me about his brother and some certain others at Gonzaga whom I dearly miss. He was happy, among friends. I tried to answer with appropriate enthusiasm but it was difficult, as any mention of Gonzaga accompanies with it a certain amount of remorseful baggage made worse by my looking down upon the beach to see a large group of kids huddled in a circle, some sort of activity underway. Mmmm, how DECA seems so long ago. The beach and the tides are so constant here; I come again and again to the same rock, soldiering against the waves. Up one moment, down the next. So we all must soldier on.



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Your comments about Cannon Beach are very well phrased, and make me want very much to see the Pacific coast again (a place I've visited over the years, but obviously not as often as you). I'm glad you have time to energize yourself before returning to school.

Oh, and Aethelred was a Saxon King of England, I am almost sure. If he was a "Viking", he was a Norseman who had taken up essentially permanent residence in England, I think. I'm saying this having not yet checked Wikipedia, since if I'm wrong I figured it would be best to be so in somewhat public fashion, but I think WP will bear me out.

Comment by jwrosenzweig September 5, 2009 @ 10:22 pm

[Reply](#)

A Saxon king who opposed the Vikings, it seems. You can let CJ know he's not listening well enough in class. ;-)

Comment by jwrosenzweig September 5, 2009 @ 10:23 pm

[Reply](#)

Yeah, FA training is going to be a pain so the beach is good stuff.

Ah, it must have been me who wasn't listening well enough to CJ – I think he had it correctly. How the hell do you know these things? My history of England is alright, but c'mon, Aethelred the Unready isn't a name dropped too often...

Comment by mvilleeneuve September 6, 2009 @ 12:20 am

I look forward to blog entries about FA training—you always manage to mine your misery for art in an interesting and entertaining way.

And Aethelred the Unready has one of the most amusing names in the history of English monarchs. I think there was a comedy sketch about him....maybe Monty Python? But in all honesty, what I was tapping into was a visual memory of a book called "The Kings and Queens of England" that I read many, many times between the ages of about 8 and 10 (although not at all since then). I can still see the crummy kids' book paintings of the Plantagenets when I concentrate. Can't explain my freakish memory...just is what it is. :-)

Comment by jwrosenzweig September 6, 2009 @ 3:26 pm

[Reply](#)

Yeah and there should be plenty of misery to be had. I'll make sure to detail it well.

Ridiculous that you know that bit, about Aethelred. Now, how did he earn the moniker "The Unready?" I could look myself but this kind of information seems to be

your forte.

Comment by mvilleeneuve September 6, 2009 @ 9:30 pm

[Reply](#)

Well, without looking it up, my recollection is that Aethelred proved ill-prepared for one of the many invasions launched by an expansionist Danish force at that time. He may actually date far back enough to when England was divided between the Danes and the Anglo-Saxons. But let me check...

Okay, Wikipedia has some interesting info—he does date to the time when England was at least partially under Danish control, and he had to agree to a massive amount of tribute to the Danish king (due in part to the Battle of Maldon—I knew there was an Old English poem of that name, but didn't know it related to him). But the name is apparently a Saxon pun, in a sense—Aethel-raed means “noble-counsel” or “noble-advice”. Un-raed means “ill-counsel” or “ill-advised” (“unready” has taken on a somewhat different meaning since) So the nickname was a jab at the name he'd been given, as it seemed ironic to some people. Poor Aethelred...not enough to have that name, but people decide it's a bad joke.

Comment by jwrosenzweig September 6, 2009 @ 10:16 pm

[Reply](#)

Fascinating era, that co-habitation of England between the Saxons and the Danes. See, that's the kind of historical anecdote that makes me love what I do. And I'm glad I got that from you, not Wikipedia – much more entertaining and I daresay better written.

Comment by mvilleeneuve September 6, 2009 @ 11:16 pm

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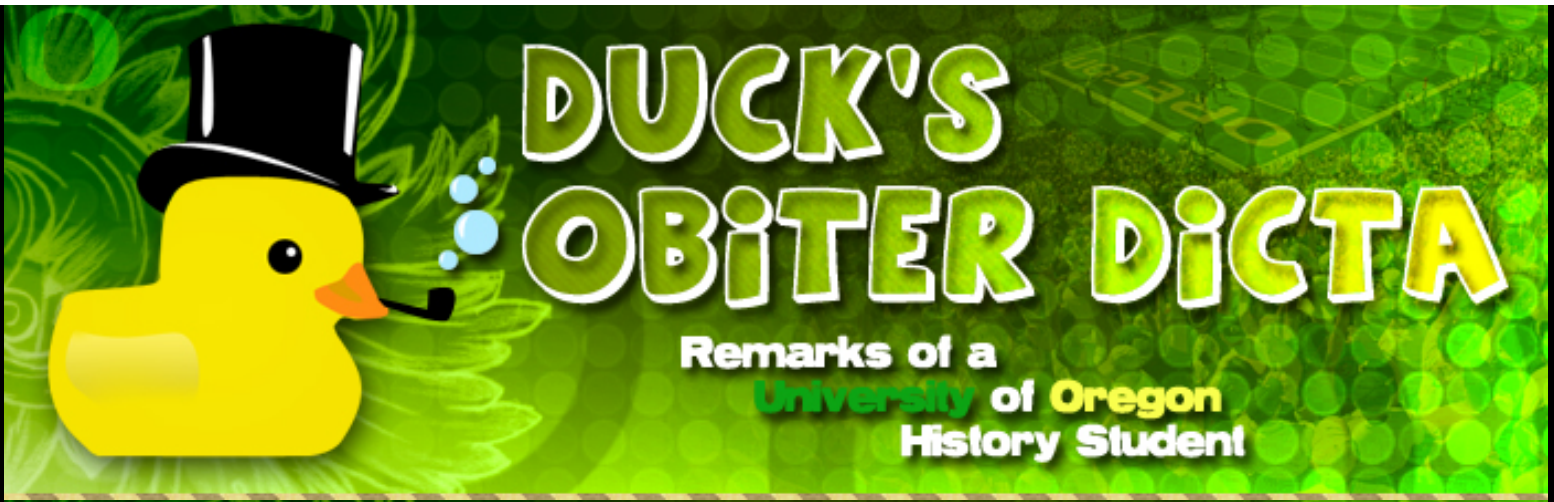
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A Casual View at the Zune HD

August 24, 2009, 4:36 pm

Filed under: [Activities](#) | Tags: [Technology](#)



The Totally Awesome Zune

HD. Image from [engadget.com](#)

I was at Microsoft today and happened upon a new Zune HD. After I wiped away the drool from my mouth, I picked it up. It was very light, lighter than my LG Touch EnV and lighter than an 80 Gb Zune. I shuddered. So light yet....so powerful. The HD also has a flash drive instead of a hard drive, apparently with 16 or 32 Gbs of flash memory. The loading screen took about 7 seconds to boot up and then, to my delight, the same old Zune menu appeared. I navigated the menus easily and intuitively; the works at Microsoft test all of these things to make sure anyone who can pick one up is able to master navigation immediately. The screen works very well and the touch technology is really quite accurate, more than my phone is. The internal horizon mechanism is reactive but not too

sensitive and has a good balance. Time was short; I ventured in to the music section to poke my way around. The Zune HD has a shortcut system in which a keyboard pops up and you can select which letter you would like to jump to: "D" for "Death Cab" under Artists or "T" under songs for "Take Me Out" by Franz Ferdinand. Or you can flip your thumb along the screen like the touch pad on the Zune 4, 8 or 80 and the list of songs or artists will fly by until it decelerates. I also opened up some preloaded images which were vivid and clear and easily followed by turning of the device up and down. I was about to try the song sharing feature, listen to the highly anticipated HD radio and have a look see at the Internet browser but as quickly as I came into temporary possession of the Zune HD, my time with the device came to an end. Into the box it went, where it will hopefully reappear under my Christmas tree in several months time.

Learn more [here](#).

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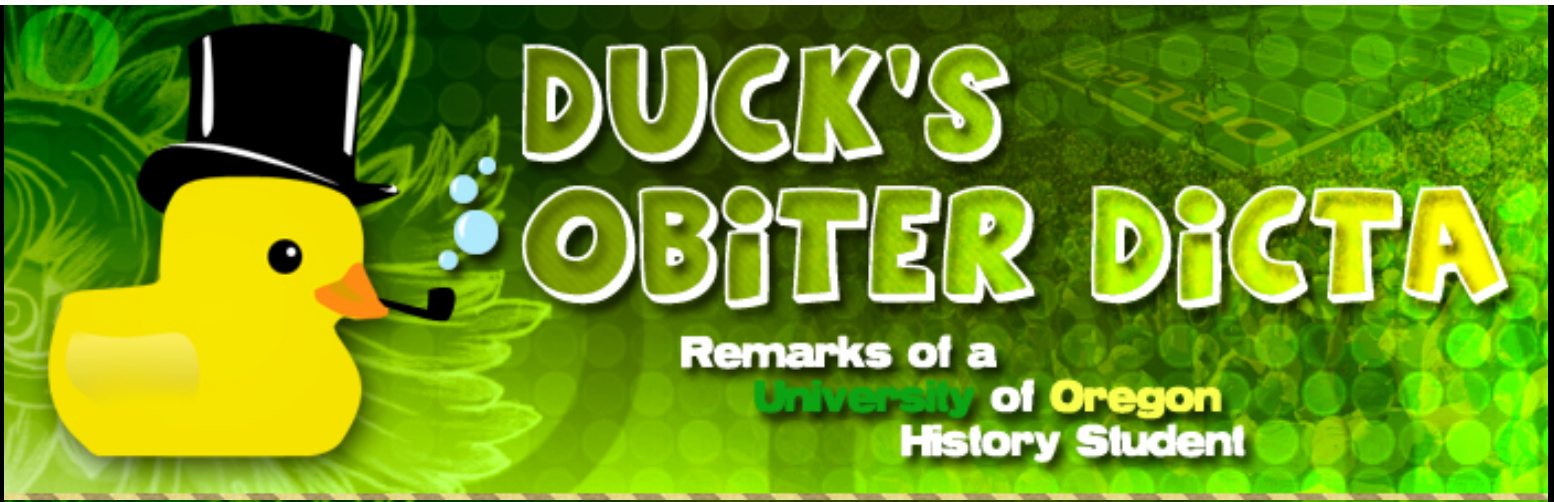
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Eye of the Tiger
August 20, 2009, 1:38 am
Filed under: [Activities](#) | Tags: [Random](#)



The trail to the summit
of Tiger 3

Climbed to the top of Tiger 3 today. Three miles up, three miles down (Currahee, anyone?) I went with my good friend Jessie who has never been hiking ever. Ever! So it was a pleasure to walk in the woods with someone who wasn't accustomed to such things. I guess I took my upbringing outdoors for granted – hiking, camping and boating was what I thought everyone did during their summers. The outdoors is a wonderful gift to give and I'm glad my parents decided the natural world wasn't too dirty for their sons.

Okay, so, I have this strange kind of day-dream scenario in my head which I let loose during particularly boring lectures: what would I do if the Russians invaded, *Red Dawn* style? (I hear someone is making a *Red Dawn* remake. Uh oh.) Like if paratroopers showed up in the middle of some random day in Sammamish (they would probably be Chinese now in 2009 calling in on debt with boots on the ground but whatever, the Russians have the whole Cold War vogue going for them so we'll stick with that) and started shooting. What would I do?

The story changes every time I consider such an event: sometimes I will decide to grab food and guns and begin a resistance movement in Sammamish, other times I will gather supplies and head for Canada in my SUV. But most of the time I find myself with a backpack and firearm, hiking up to the top of Tiger 3 to lay low and scout the area, documenting troop movements for the Army and tacking down friends and family before hoofing it into the real wilderness of the Cascades where I will survive for years by hunting game and fishing to provide for the forest colony of refugees, a la mode *Defiance*. Hopefully I'd meet up with someone like Daniel Craig and kick ass and take names as they say. Realistic? No. Awesome? Yes.



Red Dawn: Image from
CONELRAD.COM

So go out on a limb and think about it; paratroopers of the Marxist variety are landing several blocks from your house - what would you do?

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- [Jeffrey Dean Morgan On Red Dawn Remake, Wolverines!](#)
- [The Most Violent Film EvAR](#)

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Have you read *Red Storm Rising* by Tom Clancy? If not, I think you definitely should—it's a Clancy novel in every sense of the word, but there's a Navy meteorologist stationed in Iceland I think you'd find appealing.

Comment by jwrosenzweig August 25, 2009 @ 12:22 pm

[Reply](#)

Yes, I have. I read it in like 7th grade and enjoyed it very much. Something about seeing a Nimitz class carrier attacked by Russian missiles was indeed very appealing.

Comment by mvilleneuve August 26, 2009 @ 11:53 am

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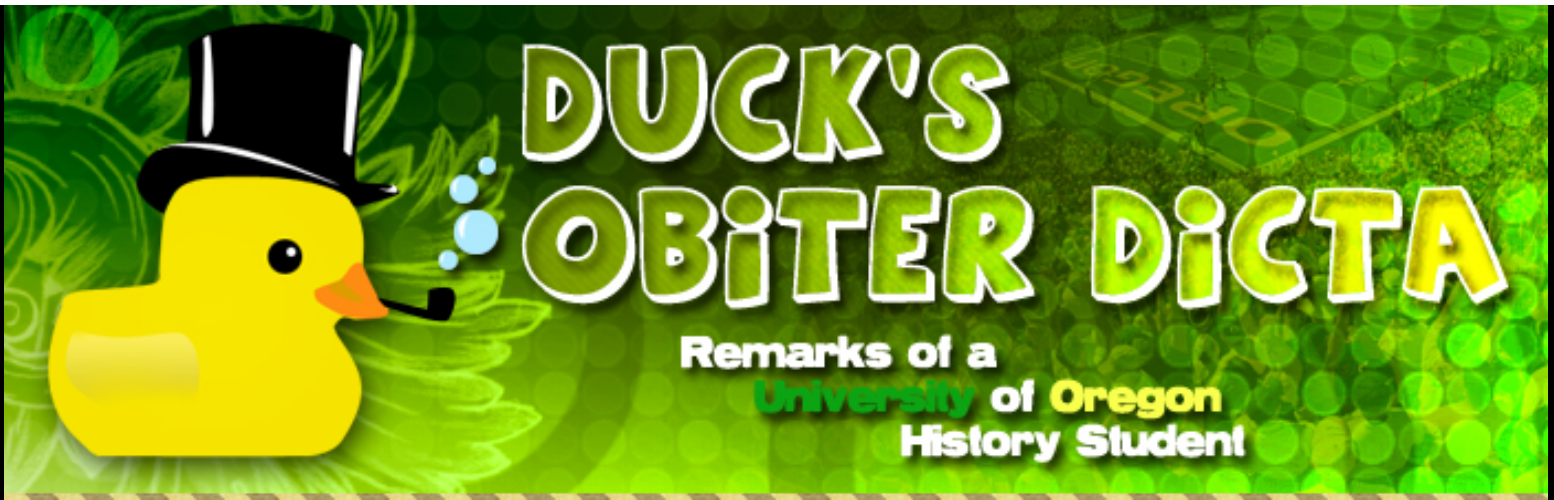
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Yesterday's Car Show Today
 August 18, 2009, 1:25 pm
 Filed under: [Observations](#) | Tags: [Auto Industry](#)



Triple XXX is one of the last great root beer drive-ins.

Two days ago, I accompanied my Dad to Triple X in Issaquah for the annual Northwest Tri-5 Chevy Club car show. I normally don't like cars and have as little to do with them as possible but Pops needed help filming the event for the club (of which he is a member) and recruited me to assist. I was only too happy to volunteer – getting up at five am on a Sunday is certainly my idea of fun.* We drove to Issaquah in our 2001 Toyota Tacoma which we used to film the rows and rows of cars (there were about 240 cars present, all 55-57 Chevys of all varieties) which stood out like a sore thumb among the now-classic cars. So this got me thinking – amid all the trouble American car companies are in at the moment, Chevrolet included, what are my generations car shows going to be like?

A lot full of Hummers? Maybe rows of Volts? Think about it – the 55-57 Chevy wasn't a luxury car by any means. My Dad bought his 56 when he was 17 for \$350, which I suppose come out to be several thousand dollars today. And sure, it takes additional funds to restore, upgrade or maintain these vehicles, but my point is that they were not the luxury cars of the day. Yet in 2009, they're awesome classic cars. Many people enjoy getting up at five am on Sunday to go look at them. Hundreds flocked to Triple X over the course of the day to gaze at the shiny paint and chrome. Thousands of dollars probably switched hands, if not for parts or cars themselves than at least in Triple X burgers. This is a pocket industry here.

My Dad bought his car when he was 17. I'm 19. Let's hypothetically suppose I'm in the market for a new car and I really want a Chevy. (This is a huge hypothetical). What do I have to choose from that wouldn't look tacky 33 years from now taking my son to go film on an early Sunday morning, the kind of car that would turn the same kind of crowds? Apart from the obvious sports cars like Corvettes and Camaros, I can think of few. A Malibu? No. What about a Silverado? I'll pass. A Suburban perhaps? Don't think so. An Avalanche? Never. Not an Aveo or Cobalt? No sir. An HHR? Are you kidding?

But I guess there is more to this than just the cars themselves. Those Tri-5 Chevys have become symbols, splendid and tangible expressions of a generation past. They say something about the country and time in which they were built. The cars themselves are huge, if not boat-like. The designers obviously didn't care how much space they took up on the road. A twelve gallon gas tank on a car that gets four miles to the gallon was an expression of plenty, not idiocy. I asked my Dad what being in a parking lot full of Tri-5 cars reminded him of. "My youth," he smiled. I told him I they reminded me of thermonuclear war. After coming off the Post-World War II high, America was a powerful, robust and rich nation that could afford such things. Gas was pocket change, the environment was immense and impertuable and confidence in the capitalist lifestyle was a high.



Large and in charge - what do today's car's say about us?

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I know a car show of Malibus and Aveos is unlikely in 30 years - they are economy cars. It will be the Corvettes and Camaro that steal the limelight. Still, if these mainstream Chevys speak volumes about their generation, what do our Chevy's today have to say to the next?

*Note the sarcasm.

Possibly related posts: (automatically generated)

- [They don't make MPVs like they used too...](#)
- [Alex shows his mad car skills](#)
- [My So Called Friend.](#)

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I agree generally...I've thought of this before. I think one of the key changes, though, is that cars weren't bought for practical reasons back then as much as they are now. A 57 Chevy simply wouldn't be competitive in this marketplace for a lot of reasons, and I don't think it's "bad taste". We're just a lot more functional about most of our cars (other than sportscars). But I think you might be wrong about a few of these—I think PT Cruisers and HHRs stand a chance simply because of their oddity.

Still, I wouldn't assume that the car show is a permanent fixture of our cultural landscape. This is nostalgia for the golden age of a vehicle whose role in our lives may change a lot over the next 50 years. We don't have many horse-and-buggy shows anymore, after all. :-) The car isn't obsolete, of course, but I think the car-as-art-object has basically no impact on the modern generation (or rather, young people who are into cars now are usually into old cars, not these modern ones).

Comment by jwrosenzweig August 25, 2009 @ 12:20 pm

[Reply](#)

Hmm this is a point I didn't even consider; are carshows a timeless exhibit? That's an interesting notion, that carshows might be endangered by the very cars themselves...

Comment by mvilleneuve August 26, 2009 @ 11:56 am

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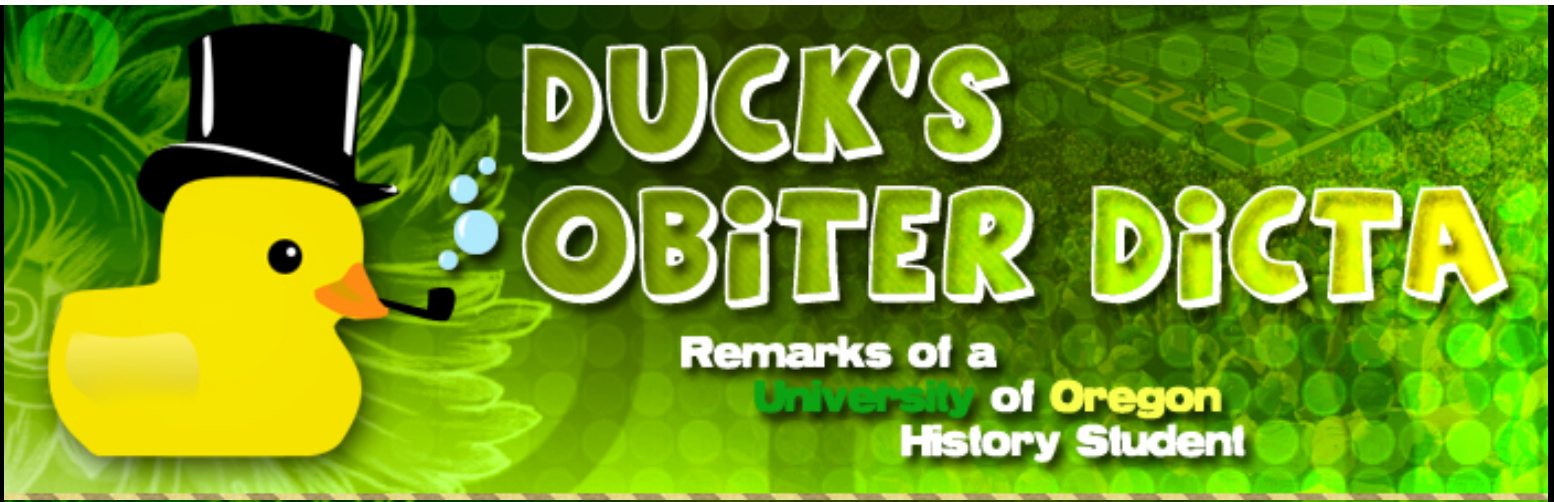
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Salutations!

August 16, 2009, 2:41 am

Filed under: [Uncategorized](#) | Tags: [Obiter Dicta](#)

Hello,

My name is Matt V and this is my blog for my Hidden History *Documenting Freshman Year Project*! Yeah, so I'm not a Freshman, but I've decided to keep this blog alongside my FIG students just the same. I hope to record and share the musings about the world that I encounter here at the UO and use this WordPress blog as an outlet for personal history, a 2009 equivalent of a journal. Along the way, I'll probably rant and rave, philosophize and frustrate and perhaps even do a little art. "Obiter Dicta" is a phrase usually employed in the world of law; it is Latin for "an incidental passing remark or opinion." Judges will often record a obiter dictum or just dictum in many cases, which are "by the way" statements that accompany a decision, to help establish the importance or precedence of a case. What could be a better title for a blog about anything and everything?

For Hidden History students: I am starting this blog to record my experiences during the 2009-2010 academic year but in order to provide some sort of example for fall term in the ways and means of blogging, I've decided to start now, in August, to get a head start (and I'm bored out of my mind at the moment incidentally – subsequently topics will range from the perspective of both an Oregon student and an American youth with nothing but TV for company). Please forgive me for I'm bending the rules a bit. Oh wait! I wrote them. Nevermind.

If you want to know more about what this blog is all about, head on over to the About page to read more about Hidden History and the Freshman Interest Group at the University of Oregon.

Cheers,

Matt

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Comment by mvilleeneuve October 30, 2009 @ *12:24 am*
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